

S E R M O N S

UPON VARIOUS

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

Preached at NORTH SHIELDS,

NORTHUMBERLAND,

By GEORGE MORE. 

1 PET. iv. 10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

1 PET. iii. 15. — *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

ROM. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

PSAL. lxxix. 15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.*

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MDCCLXXXV.

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THE Author of the following Discourses would not have presumed to offer them to public view, had he not felt himself urged to it by a variety of weighty considerations. Besides those which are legal, and in which his friends alone are interested, there are others, with which the candid public has a right to be made acquainted. It has been a just complaint with religious persons of all denominations, that the greater part of the publications which have been lately published, have been with doctrines very foreign from the spirit of the Gospel. To counteract, as much as may be, the fatal influence of such publications, he humbly thinks is the indispensable duty of those who are set for the defence of the Gospel: and willing to contribute his endeavours, however inconsiderable, to this important design, he proposed the publication of these Discourses. In them, some of the most capital and peculiar doctrines of the religion are introduced, and an illustration of them attempted. With warm justice and integrity this is executed, does not become him to say: the impartial public will judge. An additional inducement has occurred since, and even was in view when the publication was proposed, arising from the Author's disconnection with that charge, to which for some time he had been fixed. As, by this event, his personal ministrations in that quarter, to all appearance, have



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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

have ceased, he wishes, by these Discourses, to be considered, as still speaking to all in the smallest degree connected with him, warning them, and testifying the Gospel of the grace of God.

The Author was also encouraged in the present undertaking by the thought, that many persons, who have not yet considered the subjects treated of, with that attention which they deserve, may be influenced (some from a motive of friendship, and others from curiosity) to read what appears in his name, the rather for being his.

If, through the divine blessing, these Discourses shall be made useful to any good purpose, the Author will reckon that he has not laboured in vain. He desires to leave them in his hands “who hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of this world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

If there is found in some places a coincidence of sentiment or expression, this it is hoped will be excused; the Author's situation, for the present, being such as to render the attempt to have those fully corrected impracticable; though in a few instances this has been attended to.

EDINBURGH,

Nov. 29. 1785.

CON-

S E R M O N I.

HOSEA, xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.

THE word of God, the Psalmist informs us, was a lamp to his feet, a light to his path. It is a light shining in a dark place, to which we do well that we take heed. —It is this alone which can make us wise unto salvation: for while it describes our miserable condition by nature, and points out the bitter source of our ruin, it at the same time fully displays to our view that glorious remedy which has been provided, exactly ascertains from whence it has proceeded, and explicitly marks out the infinitely wise methods by which it has been accomplished. In proof of this being the fact, we can present you with nothing more apposite than the words of our text, in which all these important objects are concisely set before us in language truly expressive. —In the preceding part of this chapter, the Lord, by the prophet Hosea, was reproving the children of Israel for their idolatry, their wantonness, pride, luxury, and other evils, with which they were chargeable. That they might the more effectually be awakened to the consideration of their ways, he at the same time threatened to inflict upon them deserved judgement, and

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this

this to such an extent, that if gone into, would awfully and utterly consume them. But behold a demonstration, that judgement is his work, his strange work, his act, his strange act; that he is a God who delighteth in mercy; even while he was rebuking them in hot displeasure, he displayed himself as waiting to be gracious, as rich in mercy, as ready to forgive; and therefore he addressed them as in our text,—*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.*

In which words we have a mournful case pointed out,—a capital charge exhibited,—and a gracious remedy proposed.—What is here stated, though in the first instance addressed unto the children of Israel, and specially claiming their attention, yet is not to be considered as peculiar to them: it doubtless is of more extensive application, and proposes what is deeply interesting to the sons of men in every period. What the Lord said to the children of Israel, he still continues to say to all under a gospel dispensation. He thus addresses us: “Oh that we may know, in this the day of our merciful visitation, the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.”

In discoursing from this subject, we propose,

I. To offer some general remarks.

II. To point out the nature of that ruin which we have brought, and are still farther bringing upon ourselves.

III. To make good the charge here exhibited; and this by shewing how we have destroyed ourselves.

IV. To unfold, in some measure, the nature of that help which is in God, and which is almighty to counteract that ruin which has befallen us.

V. To instruct that this help is wholly in, with, and from God.

VI. To conclude with some improvement.

I. IT

I. It is proposed, in the *first* place, to offer some general remarks; and here we have in view to remark,

1. That sin always brings ruin along with it. This remark claims our attention, and the rather as we are too apt to think lightly of sin, to indulge ourselves freely in evil doing, under the apprehension that it is neither so evil nor so bitter a thing as is by some represented: deluding ourselves, that we shall be safe, though we go on in our trespasses. But, my brethren, however much we may deceive ourselves with these apprehensions, nothing is more certain, than that sin without fail brings ruin along with it. This is the fact, not merely as to some atrocious offence or aggravated transgression, but also as to every individual evil deed. The apostle peremptorily asserts, "the wages of sin is death." It is observable the assertion is not, the wages of sinning is death, as if only a course of evil doing, or at least some heinous sin, entailed such a punishment; but the expression is, "the wages of sin is death," stating, in the most explicit manner, that this was the fact, not only in some cases, but in every instance whatever.—When our first parents were created, placed in Paradise, and put for a time in a state of probation, as in covenant with their great Creator, the precept was, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou mayst not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." In which case also it is obvious, that the threatening was levelled not against a course, but against a particular act of disobedience; hence, as often as this was repeated, the penalty would be incurred: and so in every other instance; for sin and suffering, guilt and misery, are altogether inseparable; the one is clearly and

repeatedly the offspring of the other: "By one
 "man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;
 "and so death passed upon all men, for that all
 "have sinned;" Rom. v. 12. "For which things
 "take the wrath of God cometh upon the children
 "of disobedience;" Col. iii. 6. When asserting
 that sin always brings ruin along with it, we do not
 mean that every act of sinning has final and eternal
 ruin inevitably connected with it. Were this the fact,
 who could be safe? Not one. "There is none
 "that doeth good, and sinneth not." By the re-
 mark, we only intend to express, that sin has for its
 wages its just demerit, death; that in less or more
 it always brings ruin along with it; and if finally
 persisted in, will, without fail, precipitate the sin-
 ner into an unfathomable and everlasting abyss of
 woe. If we attend to the verse before us, in its
 connection, we will discern a striking illustration
 of this awful, this alarming truth; we will per-
 ceive, that all that ruin in which the children of
 Israel were for the present involved, or were in fu-
 ture exposed unto, was, without doubt, the direful
 consequence of their evil conduct.—We remark,

2. That sinners are, all of them, without excep-
 tion, self-destroyers. No character can be more
 proper; no charge can be more just. When ini-
 quity prevails, and is persisted in, destruction must
 be inevitable. Iniquity being of and by ourselves, we
 certainly must be considered as the authors of our
 own misery, as the promoters of our own destruc-
 tion. This is so undoubted, that were there no
 sin, there would be no suffering; no misery: It
 is only because sin entered, that death, with all its
 dreary associates, found a passage into the world.
 It is because that all are sinners, either by imputa-
 tion, or actually in their own persons, or in both
 ways, that they become subject to wrath and woe.

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It is only the soul that sinneth that shall die. At the same time, it is carefully to be adverted unto, that it is not those sins only which we have personally committed, that will subject us to punishment. The sin of the first man, though not personally committed by us, yet clearly involves us in guilt, as being, in strict propriety, our sin. It is justly imputed to us, in consequence of his sustaining the character, and acting in the capacity of our federal head, and representative: and besides this, the evil conduct of others becomes sometimes chargeable upon us, as is the case, when we serve ourselves heirs to their iniquities, by an approbation of them; when we do not duly lament over, or are not in our sphere faithfully testifying against them. In either of these circumstances, sins, though committed by others, become ours: we are subject to all the direful consequences resulting thence. Of these sentiments was the Psalmist, when he thus expressed himself: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly;" Psal. cvi. 6. Our Saviour alarmed the Jews, with intimating that there would come upon them all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias; and at the same time he assigned the reason: They would fill up the measure of their fathers iniquity.

Thus, we say, all the ruin in which persons are involved, or are exposed unto, is of and from themselves, what is procured and produced by their own evil deeds: "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands:" hence it is that they are all of them self-destroyers. This, in the sacred Scriptures, is explicitly taught. In particular, the prophet Jeremiah has these expressions, chap. ii. 17. 19: "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that

“thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he
 “led thee by the way? Thine own wickedness
 “shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall re-
 “prove thee.” And so also to the same purpose
 in various other places. Consider this, then, and
 be afraid, ye that go frowardly on in your tref-
 passes.

3. We remark, That professors of religion, by
 a conduct unsuitable to their profession, and un-
 worthy of their privileges, may, and too often do,
 become, in a distinguished sense, self-destroyers.
 You will observe, that it is a professing people a-
 gainst whom the charge in our text is exhibited;
 and doubtless, when the pointed manner in which
 it is expressed is considered, it will be obvious, that
 there is thence intimated, that while, in all the ex-
 tent of the character, it was true that sinners were
 self-destroyers, at the same time the charge was too
 often, in an eminent manner, to be stated against the
 professors of religion, against such as could claim the
 name ISRAEL: *O Israel, THOU hast destroyed thyself.*
 This is what must be admitted. Though every sin-
 ner, whatever his situation and circumstances are,
 undoubtedly brings that ruin unto and upon him-
 self, in which he for the present is, and finally will
 be involved, and so is in fact a self-destroyer; yet
 other transgressors are not so much, or in so dis-
 tinguished a sense, self-destroyers, as those who
 enjoy the means of light and knowledge, who are
 privileged with an acceptable time, and the day of
 salvation; who have sin and duty, the blessing and
 the curse, life and death, clearly exhibited before
 them, and yet notwithstanding set the whole at
 nought, reject the counsel of God against their
 own souls, refuse to profit by the privileges en-
 joyed, and rush upon their own destruction: Such,
 we say, are in a distinguished sense self-destroyers,
 as

as following a course of evil-doing wilfully and deliberately, in direct opposition to manifold warnings and reproofs, in express contradiction to illustrious displays of the evil nature, the awful demerit of sin, and in contempt of the exceeding riches, the absolute sovereignty of divine grace, as reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ; thus exposing themselves to all the dreadful consequences which inevitably follow upon their evil conduct. Hence says the Apostle, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin;" James, iv. 17. To the same purpose, Jesus, in relation to Capernaum, declared, "Thou, Capernaum, which," in point of privilege, "art exalted unto heaven, shalt," as the just demerit of thy deep guiltiness, "be thrust down into hell." And to the Jews he thus expressed himself: "If I had not come and spoken these things unto you, ye would have had no sin; but now ye have no cloak for your sin." All which clearly points out, that where a profession of religion is made, where privileges are enjoyed, and these misimproved, such are eminently self-destroyers. It highly interests us, that we advert seriously to this, that we duly consider, and lament over our deep guiltiness, in so far as thus chargeable; and that, in the exercise of a lively faith, we fly to the blood of sprinkling, that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. We remark,

4. That the charges which the Lord brings against a person or people, in order to their conviction, is very pointed and particular. It was eminently so in the case before us, and in various other instances. There is the highest propriety, and we may add necessity, for this dispensation: General charges, even when well founded, though they sometimes do, and always should, produce conviction,

conviction, more especially as coming from God, yet they are by no means so calculated for the purpose, as when exhibited in more pointed and particular terms. While the charge is only general, however guilty persons may be, however applicable it is in all its extent; yet as it includes a great deal, comprehends a variety of particulars and persons under it, every one is too apt to put it away from himself, to consider it as particularly accommodated unto, and levelled against others; and in this way it too often loses much, if not the whole, of that effect which it should have: whereas, when the charge is rendered particular, and becomes pointed, the only alternative is, either to admit or deny it in full, or, which is as bad, if not worse than denying it, disregard and despise it altogether. When, therefore, the Lord takes a dealing with a person or people, in order unto their conviction, as previous either to a favourable or frowning dispensation which is to follow upon it, he, in these charges which are stated, is very pointed and particular; they are written as with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; he brings them clearly home, makes them particularly distinct and legible, insomuch that they must in less or more produce conviction: and then the glory of his justice appears conspicuous in the execution of deserved judgement, when this is the method of his procedure; and, on the other hand, the exceeding riches of his grace becomes manifest, when displayed towards such heinous transgressors. Hence, in the verse before us, and in the first verse of the following chapter, the Lord, as having a gracious design upon Israel, and, as introductory to this, having in view to bring them to a due acquaintance with, a being affected on account of, their present sinful situation, he states a very pointed, a very particular charge against them.

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He insists, that they were destroyed, that they had fallen, were ruined; and at the same time protests, that it was themselves, their own iniquity, that had produced all this. Thus also with David: While the charge was only expressed in general terms, there was little attention given to it; but the Lord being in earnest to bring him to a sense of his folly and wickedness, the prophet is directed to address him in the most pointed manner, *Thou art the man*; and then the event was corresponding. The charge could no longer be resisted; he must acknowledge, "I have sinned against the Lord, "in that I have shed innocent blood." Thus also in the case of Jerusalem, and in a variety of other instances; for it is to be observed, that the Lord seldom proceeds to the actual execution of judgment upon ungodly sinners, but in the way of making in some sort visible, even to them, the justice of his procedure, arising from their great guiltiness, and which renders their visitation still more poignant, still more tremendous, than otherwise it would be. As this is the case on the one hand, on the other it is still more undoubted, that he never proceeds to the accomplishment of a saving purpose in and upon any, without in less or more making them sensible of their present sinful and miserable situation. To this end he deals particularly with them. The Holy Spirit is sent to convince persons of sin, previous to his being employed in taking of the things of Christ, and shewing these to them; and the testimony which the Spirit manages in their hearts is so full, so explicit, that there is no evasion for them. They, under his influence, are constrained to plead guilty. Thus it is that Jesus and his salvation become precious unto them, as being that without which they must perish. Reflect, then, if the Lord has so dealt with you. If matters are right,

right, you certainly must have some experience of this nature.

5. We remark, That as the Lord graciously compassionates sinners, self-destroyers, when in their low estate, so in his dealings with a view to their recovery, he is very urgent and pressing. The Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners. He wills that they should turn to him and live. He is urgent that they should be awakened to a sense of their danger, that they turn from the evil of their doings, their ways that are not good, that iniquity may not be their ruin. Hence he is most affectionate in his dealings with them to this end. Thus, in the verse before us, with what earnestness and concern does Jehovah express himself: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help*: In effect thus addressing them, "Israel, my chosen, my peculiar
 " people, who wast once the glory of the nations,
 " the envy of all around thee; thou wast ori-
 " ginally upright, a noble vine, altogether of
 " right seed. Ah! alas, what a sad reverse! The
 " gold has become dim, the most fine gold chan-
 " ged. Thou hast become the degenerate plant of
 " a strange vine. Thou hast dreadfully debased
 " and dishonoured thyself; nay, thou hast laid
 " violent hands upon thyself. From that height
 " of glory and dignity in which thou wast placed,
 " thou hast flung thyself, and art sunk into the
 " deepest abyss of misery. Thou hast destroyed
 " thyself. O Israel, the bowels of my compas-
 " sion yern towards thee; I am truly urgent,
 " am earnestly desirous that thou mayst be re-
 " covered out of these distressful circumstances;
 " and therefore I present to your view a glo-
 " rious, an unexceptionable way of escape. O
 " *Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is*
 " *thine*

"*thine help.*" To the same purpose are his dealings in other instances, as in the 1st verse of the following chapter, in the 8th and 9th verses of the 11th chapter of this same prophecy; and, to mention no more, how affectionate are his exhortations in Psal. lxxxi. 8. 11. Such still is the case. The Lord is now as urgent and affectionate in his dealings as ever. He is renewing, repeating to us his dealings in former periods. "What was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort in the Scriptures, might have hope." Be persuaded then to listen to God's voice, to answer at his call, to turn at his reproof. Seek that in this the day of your merciful visitation, you may know the things that belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes. We remark,

6. That sinners having destroyed themselves, their recovery was impossible; final ruin was inevitable, unless the Lord had graciously interposed to accomplish the one, and to prevent the other. This is obvious. Doubtless those who had precipitated themselves into ruin, and who had done so wilfully, were by no means qualified to counteract that ruin which they had brought upon themselves. They were utterly disabled; and therefore the whole human race inevitably must have perished, had there been no other method of recovery proposed. Hence, in the verse before us, it is observable, that while the mournful case pointed out is charged upon the children of Israel as the authors of it, there is no reference made to them, as if in the smallest degree capable or qualified to bring relief from it. The profound silence in relation to this clearly points out the impracticability of any such thing; more especially, when it is considered that they are directed to another quarter than themselves for relief, if ever they would

would become possessed of it. Nay, the matter is put beyond a doubt, if we read the verse as with propriety it may be rendered: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; for in me is thine help*: which clearly points out, that nothing had, that nothing could proceed from Israel which was subservient to their relief; that, so far from this, they had been all along destroying themselves, plunging themselves deeper and deeper in ruin, and would continue to do so: relief could only arise to them when they lifted up their eyes to those hills from whence their help alone could come.

There is no truth that deserves more serious attention or more frequent recollection than this, that while we have destroyed ourselves, we are wholly unable and unwilling to help ourselves. We are too apt to deceive ourselves by thinking that we have some ability; whereas the reverse is without question the fact. Having destroyed ourselves, being dead in trespasses and in sins, in the nature of things we must be wholly without strength. Hence, if our recovery did in the smallest degree depend upon our exertions, it could never be brought about. It is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps aright in any instance; much less to bring himself from that fearful pit, and that miry clay into which all are sunk. It is no small attainment to become fully sensible of this. The natural pride, the legal bias of the corrupt heart, recoil exceedingly against the humbling truth, and will by no means allow it to be well founded; and indeed it is not till the Holy Spirit takes an effectual dealing with persons, and brings them to a just acquaintance with their real situation, that any will suitably acquiesce in that verdict which the sacred Scriptures give in relation to them. Be in earnest then, my brethren, that the Spirit may be at work in your hearts to this end: that help,

help, which is provided for and proposed unto you, can never meet with a becoming entertainment, till once a conviction as to your absolute need of it be produced in you. — We farther remark,

7. That the whole of that help which sinners need, from that ruin in which they had involved themselves, is in, with, and from the Lord. While they were utterly incapable of helping themselves, and when it is farther considered, that, even though the angelic powers had been combined with the utmost exertions of the human kind, the attempt would have been unavailing; for the redemption of the soul was precious, and, in respect of what creatures were capable of, must have ceased for ever; we say, in these circumstances, it is evident, that final ruin became inevitable and universal, had not Jehovah's arm brought salvation. This was a work for which infinite wisdom, power, and grace, alone was equal. That help which mankind stood in absolute need of could arise no where else; and here it is to be found in all the extent of the blessing. This, in our text, is expressly asserted: while the ruin of the children of Israel was of and by themselves, it is declared, that their relief was derived, and could be derived from no other quarter than Jehovah himself; hence the one is pointed out as effectual to counteract the other: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.* It is of importance to our present purpose to observe, that the last part of the verse may be rendered still more emphatic, and expresses thus much, I am in thy help, thy help is from me; intimating, that Jehovah is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and perfection of it. This is, without question, the fact; as may afterwards be illustrated. The salvation of sinners, in all the extent of the blessing, is the doing of the Lord, and as

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such should be wondrous in our eyes. He indeed makes use of means and instruments in carrying forward this work; and his doing so is no disparagement to him as the great worker. Among other instruments which he employs, the person's self is one; and this is no small honour to him. But it is the only honour he can claim; for of himself he is utterly incapable of the smallest spiritual exertion. It is only in the event of Jehovah's working in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is by virtue of his union to, and communion with Jesus, that he can be fruitful in any good word or work. Hence all who have suitable apprehensions of the work, and of themselves, however great their attainments are, will take no praise to themselves. When acting in character, they will give the glory where it is due; and, with the Apostle, explicitly declare, that, in every instance, it is not them, but the grace of God, the working of his mighty power, in and by them, that has produced the whole; for without this they can do nothing. — We have only to remark,

In the *last* place, That the great, the gracious design, on account of which Jehovah brings their sin and misery in review before persons, by the dispensation of the gospel, is specially that he may commend his mercy and grace as fully commensurate to their relief, and may thus lead out to a becoming improvement of it, according to need. He pronounces them sinful, he proclaims them miserable, that, with the greater propriety and efficacy, he may propose and commend to them his mercy and grace, as rising vastly superior to all that sinfulness and misery which is with them. It is by no means for the purpose of increasing their misery, or tormenting them before the time, that he displays the wretchedness of their situation: It is not with a view to produce despair and despondency,

dency, and so give occasion for their adding iniquity to iniquity, that he arraigns them as verily guilty. He cannot, directly or indirectly, do any evil; and judgement is his strange work, his strange act. His great design in the whole, therefore, is, to awaken and alarm, to rouse them from that deep sleep into which they had fallen; to produce some proper thoughtfulness in regard to their situation; and, from a sight of what they are, what they need, to commend the exceeding riches of his mercy, as in every respect corresponding to their relief. While he declares what they are, what they have done, he displays what he is, what he will do for them; that when, from a review of their sinful and miserable condition, their hearts may be ready to faint and fail, his mercy may hold them up. Thus, in the verse before us, while a capital charge was exhibited;—*Thou hast destroyed thyself*; lest this should overwhelm in despair and despondency, a gracious declaration is immediately subjoined, which, if suitably improved, was fully sufficient to counteract all the direful effects which an attention to the other might produce,—*in me is thine help*. To the same purpose, there is a very heavy charge stated against Israel in the prophecies of Isaiah, ch. xlii. 22. 23. 24. after which, a gracious declaration immediately follows. They were thus made acquainted with their great guiltiness, not that they might sink under a sense of it, but that they might feel their need of, and discern the exceeding riches of that mercy which is with God, in blotting out transgressions for his own sake—that they might be induced to a becoming improvement of him to this end. Hence the direction is, vers. 26. “Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayst be justified.” It is here carefully to be adverted to, that a proper im-

provement of the divine dealings and dispensations towards us lies in our rendering a due attention to them in all their extent, in that connection with, that relation they have to each other. The gracious relief which Jehovah proposes cannot be profitably surveyed, unless the capital charges which he is exhibiting, the dreadful ruin that is consequent to these, is at the same time duly observed, and the whole with particular application to ourselves. In like manner, those capital charges which may be exhibited against us, that grievous ruin which has befallen us, cannot ever be comfortably reviewed, but when there is, in the exercise of a lively faith, a particular consideration and improvement of the glorious relief which is proposed; so that a due regard to either can only be exhibited when there is a suitable connected attention rendered to both: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.*—It was proposed,

II. To point out the nature of that ruin which we have brought, and are still farther bringing upon ourselves.

I. This is a melancholy, an affecting task; but necessary, and may be profitable. We cannot ever be suitably exercised in regard to that destruction in which we are involved, till once we are made acquainted with its nature and extent. We shall submit to your consideration what appears to us upon this subject. It is the Lord, the Spirit, that can only make useful what may be offered, when in agreeableness to that revelation which he has given us in relation to it. We begin with observing,

1. The understanding is overwhelmed in darkness. This leading faculty is despoiled of its primal glory, and is covered with confusion. In
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its original constitution, it was a lamp of light, and, according to its sphere, every way qualified to apprehend and penetrate into every object which presented itself. To man, when in a state of innocence, there was no need for laboured researches to convince of truth, or assist in the acquisition of knowledge. Every thing, as soon as it was proposed to his discerning mind, became obvious and easy; for he was light in the Lord. Hence, with what readiness did Adam give names to all those creatures, when brought to him, of which he was to be the Lord, and names exactly suited to their nature. He perfectly understood the will of his great Creator in relation to his duty and happiness, and in every instance had as clear a discernment as was competent to the station he filled. But, ah, alas! man being in honour, abode not! How soon did the gold become dim! How soon was the most fine gold changed! The understanding, instead of being what it once was, is now overwhelmed in darkness. It is wholly deranged and disordered. By aspiring after things too high for us, we precipitated ourselves into the deepest wretchedness. We presumptuously wished, as God, to know good and evil, and in the attempt have degraded ourselves below the beasts that perish. We are now become more brutish than they: We have not the knowledge of a man: Our understandings are weakened, are disabled, are darkened, nay, are darkness itself in the abstract. With respect to spiritual and eternal concerns, we are wholly ignorant: "Having the understanding darkened, we are alienated from the life of God, through the foolishness that is in us, because of the blindness of our minds." There has not merely, as it were, a film arisen upon the eyes of our understanding; which renders our sight only imperfect, inadequate to what it once was, but the very eyes of our

understanding are put out. We are reduced to utter darkness. This the apostle avers, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man," says he, that is, every man in his natural estate, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" in effect intimating, that, while in this situation, there is no visive faculty suited to those objects; and therefore it is impossible that they can be apprehended. Hence, how difficult is it for persons to be taught the common principles of religion? What little progress do even the most sedulous make in this study? while, after all, where the greatest attainments are, till spiritually enlightened, these know nothing as it ought to be known. What is still more affecting is, that though the understanding is not so wholly disabled as that it is utterly incapable of apprehending any thing; yet it is but little that, from its utmost exertions, it can now arrive at, in comparison with its original stretch; and even that little is almost wholly ingrossed in the knowledge of that as to which we had better for ever be ignorant. We are wise to do evil; but to do good we have no knowledge. In short, sin has so affected the understanding, that nothing but darkness reigns there. The prince of darkness rules over us. The works of darkness alone are framed in the soul. We are all born spiritually blind; and nothing but a miracle of grace can reverse our situation.

2. The conscience is disabled and defiled. This is expressly stated by the apostle, Tit. i. 15. "Unto them that are pure," says he, "all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." The conscience is God's vicegerent in the soul: at the same time, it cannot ever exercise itself but according to that light

light it has to work by. When, therefore, the natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit of God, the conscience is then disabled from acting its part. By sin it is cast into such a deep sleep, is so overspread with darkness and defilement, that it must be awakened, enlightened, and purged, before it can be capable of executing its office in relation to spiritual and eternal concerns. The light of the natural conscience is truly defective; its operations at best are but faint and languid. Hence, though in some instances it may check as to grosser impurities, yet it does not restrain as to the more subtle workings of iniquity; and no wonder, for it does not discern them. Besides, even the checks which it affords while in this state, do not so properly reach sin as sin, but as something dishonourable, dangerous, and destructive. In the same manner, as to duties, though it may direct to the practice of some, yet it does not influence an unfeigned respect to any, and much less to all God's commandments. The reason is obvious, there is no proper delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. Thus, with many, conscience will fly in their face, if they are chargeable with swearing, drunkenness, adultery, or such like gross sins. If they are not given to prayer in the outward form, and are not attentive to ordinances with their bodily presence, who otherwise are living in the profoundest peace; though there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, and this exerting itself in continued acts of departure from the living God; though they are perfect strangers to the spirituality of worship, and the power of godliness; in these circumstances, the incitements to duty, the checks for, and struggles against sin are very languid and remiss; are such as the natural man easily gets over; so that conscience has little or no influence upon persons when in their natural estate.

estate. It is farther to be observed, that there is a false light in the mind, which greatly misleads, by which the person is induced to call evil good, and good evil. And while all this is the case with some, there are others, and we fear these are the greater part, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, who, without feeling the least check or remonstrance from them, go on from evil to worse; and often there is not an awakening from this insensibility, this inactivity, till in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torment. Sin, when it prevails, and in proportion as it does so, has the effect of infatuating and defiling the conscience. This, therefore, is one particular ingredient in that destruction which we have brought upon ourselves, and which should be duly considered and lamented by us as a most affecting circumstance; for if the conscience is defiled, is darkened, is disabled, and either is incapable of its office, or is judging through a corrupted false medium, the consequence must doubtless be fatal, unless matters are timely got rectified.

3. The will has become perverse and rebellious. The will, that commanding faculty, which in its original state was faithful for, and ruled with God, has now become traiterous, and rebels against him. It rules with and for the devil. God at first planted it in man a noble plant, wholly of right seed; but it has become the degenerate plant of a strange vine. It was placed in a due subordination to the will of its great Creator. There was not, there could not be the smallest contrariety in the one to the other. The will of man was then wholly directed and regulated by the will of God; it was his meat and his drink, to do the will of his heavenly Father. But now, alas! this is far from being the state of matters; we have destroyed ourselves, and, as a capital branch of that ruin, our wills have wholly

wholly turned aside from God, and from his way. It has become perverse, is to every good word and work reprobate. We are sensible that some are disposed to magnify the powers and assert the moral rectitude of the human will. In opposition to the experience of all ages, they are not ashamed to affirm that it is equally poised to good and evil. Alas! a proper acquaintance with the spirituality of the divine law, and a due insight into the corruption of human nature, as given by the revelation, the inward operation of the Holy Spirit, when convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement, will produce very different sentiments, and make sensible of the absolute need there is for the exertion of divine power and grace to remove the bands of wickedness, with which our wills are held; otherwise these can never have any bias, even the smallest, to that which is truly good. There is nothing more undoubted, than that as to spiritual and eternal objects our wills are wholly perverse and rebellious. While the darkness of the understanding misleads and incapacitates the will from all proper exertions, it is also to be recollected, that there now belongs to it both an inability for and an aversion to a chusing that which is truly good. Instead of following after that which is good, we follow, and will not but follow after that which is evil; and while there is in the will a natural contrariety, a direct opposition to God, his will and way, there is at the same time a proneness to evil. It is bent to backsliding. The sinner being joined to his idols, after them he will go. He refuses to return from the error of his way; for it is set in the heart of man to do evil, and that continually. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And this enmity is deliberately determined, and universal.

4. The affections are wholly disordered, vitiated, and corrupted. The affections of the first man were all pure and holy; pure from all defilement, free from every disorder and distemper; because in all their motions they were subject to his clear reason and his holy will. He was created in righteousness and true holiness; but, alas! what a sad reverse now presents itself in all his children. The affections, instead of being pure and regular, as they once were, are wholly corrupted and disordered. They have become altogether irregular and unmanageable. The heart is the mother of all abominations: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." Our affections are wholly misplaced. Instead of being set upon things above, as should be, they, in contradiction to duty and interest, cleave to the things that are on the earth. Our face and affections are towards sin, Satan, the world, and hell: They are turned from God, holiness, and heaven. By nature, we love that which we should hate; we hate that which we should love: we mourn and murmur at that which should fill us with the utmost joy and satisfaction; we rejoice and take pleasure in that which should occasion the deepest sorrow and regret; we abhor that which we should desire, and we lust after that which, with the utmost abhorrence, we should detest; we are ashamed of that which should be our glory, and glory in that which should cover us with confusion. In short, every thing in our affections is turned upside down; matters are wholly deranged and disordered: and hence it is, that we are not only already ruined, but also are still farther plunging ourselves into the abyss of destruction. Whence is it, that, on the one hand, persons take so much pleasure

sure in unrighteousness, work all manner of iniquity with greediness, and, on the other, are so averse unto, so ready to weary of, to wander in religious exercises! The reason evidently is, the affections are disordered, vitiated, and corrupted.

5. The memory is impaired, and wholly vitiated. Though in its original state it was capable of great things, and had a most extensive stretch; yet, alas! how limited now is its capacity, how enfeebled are its exertions! What is still more affecting, though formerly, like all the other powers of the soul, it could admit no unclean thing to enter within its environs, but was altogether consecrated to the service of holiness; yet how debased and defiled has it become. Hence, instead of being engaged in the interests of holiness, and what relates to the glory of God, as should be, it acts eminently in opposition to both, exerts itself in the service of sin, and conforms to the arbitrary will of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Thus, what is good and worthy of remembrance makes but little impression upon the memory: it is often with difficulty that it makes any; and even that impression which it makes, as it is small, so it is soon effaced, and the whole quite forgot: whereas that which is evil readily gains admission, always makes a deep impression, and has a lasting continuance with us. We feel no difficulty in retaining, in recollecting it; nay, the worse, the more abominable the matter is, the more tenacious of it will the memory be.

As the memory is impaired and defiled, the imagination also is corrupted and vitiated. These two are twin powers, intimate associates, they mutually assist and influence each other; hence what the one retains, the other improves: what the imagination devises and improves, the memory but too well retains, more especially when the mat-
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ter is vile and corrupt. While the imagination should be holiness to the Lord, in what a different manner is it employed? The word of inspiration informs us, that with all in their natural estate, the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart are evil, and that continually. It chiefly exerts itself in the service of vanity, vileness, folly, and absurdity. It therefore may justly be said of us, We have fallen by our iniquity.

6. The soul is not only ruined in its powers, but also the body in all its members. In the original constitution of the human frame, the body was an help-meet to the soul in those acts of worship and service which were rendered to their great Creator; its members were instruments of righteousness to holiness. But, ah! how quite the reverse! The body has lost that fitness of subserviency to the exalted and pure operations of the more noble part, which in the constitution of the human person it had, and in its room has contracted an awkward untowardness unto, nay, an entire unfitness for the purposes of its original destination. Even when the new man is formed, and the person is in part renewed, as is the happy experience of some, the body, in regard of its being so shattered, so much laid in ruin, becomes an heavy clog and restraint to the soul in aiming at proper exercise, that on this account, as well as still more important grounds, such cannot do the things that they would. In the natural man, the body is wholly corrupted and ruined; its members are instruments of unrighteousness to iniquity: hence it is pointed out by the apostle as sinful flesh; and it may be so designed, because it has a natural tendency to sin, nay, strongly incites to the commission of iniquity. It leads the soul into snares, and is itself often a snare unto it, instead of being subservient to the important purpose for which it was originally intended, that it might glorify

rify God, it is now devoted to the service of sin and Satan. Thus the eyes and ears are avenues by which sin enters. "The tongue is an unruly member; the throat is an open sepulchre. In the hands is the act of violence, and the feet run to evil, they make haste to shed innocent blood. The whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint: From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but all are wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores."

7. We have lost our strength. This may be considered as a summary of the whole that has been expressed in the preceding observations; at the same time we judge it deserves a distinct attention, as affording a striking view of that destruction in which we have involved ourselves. If the soul, in the whole of its powers, and the body in all its members, are ruined, this certainly points out that we are without strength; for these are at once the glory and strength of human nature,—what serve to constitute the man. It is, however, to be observed, that as the faculties of the soul, and the members of the body, required vigour and strength that they might be exercised, and which they accordingly at first possessed in perfection; so the ruin which has befallen us, lies particularly in that strength having departed from us, in our having become weak and feeble in all the powers of the soul and members of the body, and this to such a degree, that we can do nothing spiritually good: we do not affirm that we can do nothing at all; for we have a natural capacity remaining, though even this is much impaired. The faculties of the soul, and the members of the body, are still with us, and in a natural way may be exercised; but in a moral, spiritual sense, our capacity is quite gone; we are not only weak, but even weakness itself; we are as incapable of exerting ourselves as the new-born infant; nay, as the person who is

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really dead ; for we in fact are so :—" We are dead " in trespasses and sins." This the apostle avers ; and he also declares, that we are without strength ; Rom. v. 6. In these circumstances our situation is rendered most deplorable : while we are without strength to obey, God has not lost either his authority, or his right to command ; and if we are shortcoming in duty, as must be, we are thus in continuance dreadfully increasing our misery, already sufficiently great ; exposing ourselves still farther to the righteous judgement of God, on account of our multiplied transgressions : this in all justice may be inflicted upon us. God cannot be accused either of cruelty or injustice, for enforcing upon us an obedience which we cannot render, or punishing for disobedience which we cannot avoid ; our incapacity is of and by ourselves, not of or from him. We originally were endowed with powers and abilities equal to what is required ; but having wilfully vitiated these, our condemnation must be just ; we are left wholly inexcusable. In common life, though a debtor has become unable to pay that which he has contracted, does it thence follow, that the creditor has lost that right which he has to demand what is his due ? or should he be pronounced cruel and unjust, if he insists for satisfaction from that person who has riotously wasted his substance ? By no means : if so, doubtless when the matter is stated as betwixt God and the sinner, it must appear with still more force and propriety.

8. We have put our best friends far from us ; we have rendered ourselves altogether friendless. In the world there is nothing more essential to happiness, than to have friends ; more especially those that are truly such, to whom we can have recourse in every emergency, and with whom we may freely unbosom ourselves, who will share our sorrows, and mingle with our joys. Hence, when deprived
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of these, and at a time when we stand much in need of their assistance, their sympathy, this certainly concurs to render our situation peculiarly distressful. Well, such eminently is our situation as sinners. While we are in circumstances which render the assistance, the sympathy of friends indispensably necessary, our ruin, which before was great, becomes still more affecting, by our being without a friend to pity or help us; more especially with the consideration, that this has been produced by our own misconduct towards them. A Three-One God, Father, Son, and ever-blessed Spirit, with the glorious inhabitants of heaven, were originally our friends, and the best of friends, who had an ability for, a disposition to act as such. But all these we have put far from us, have rendered ourselves fatherless, are altogether friendless. We have no one that has ability, or is disposed, to take our part, to stand up for us. We are in a situation the most destitute imaginable, and have brought ourselves to all this by our iniquity. A most affecting representation to this purpose you have, by the prophet Ezekiel, xvi. 3. 4. 5. in these words: "Thy birth and thy nativity was of the
" land of Canaan, thy father was an Amorite, thy
" mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in
" the day that thou wast born, thy navel was not
" cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple
" thee: thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled
" at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these
" unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but
" thou wast cast out in the open field, to the
" lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast
" born." With this stands connected the account which the apostle gives, Ephes. ii. 12.: "That at
" that time ye were without Christ, being aliens
" from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no
" hope,

"hope, and without God in the world." What situation can be more deplorable, more distressful, than this? yet it is common to every individual of mankind; for of such it is affirmed. After all, this is not the whole of that ruin that has befallen us: For,

9. We have rendered God our enemy, our powerful adversary; we have raised up the whole creation in arms against us. This is a most alarming, and yet a most undoubted circumstance. By our evil doing, we have not only put God far from us as our friend, our best friend, but have also provoked his indignation, have rendered him our powerful adversary; for he is angry with the wicked every day. As by sin we have cast him off, and declared war against him, so he has also cast us off, and in his wrath will vex us. Hence, as an evidence of his displeasure, his enmity against sin and the sinner, no sooner did Adam become guilty, than Jehovah drove him out from paradise, and declared war against every such transgressor. His quarrel with and against sin is irreconcilable. Those continuing under its power, in avowed rebellion against him, must ever be the objects of his wrath and hot displeasure. But who can stand before his indignation? who "can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" His fury is poured out "like fire, and rocks are thrown down by him." Besides, not only have we rendered God our adversary, but we have also raised the whole creation in arms against us. All these, as it were, offer themselves to resent the quarrel of their dread Sovereign, to be the instruments of deserved judgment upon guilty men. The angels, who excel in strength, are without doubt our enemies while we are at enmity with God; and if this should finally be our situation, they will at last exert themselves as the executioners of divine justice upon ungodly sinners:

ners: Bind them hand and foot, and cast them into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Every creature in this lower world has also an enmity against us, and would concur to promote our ruin, because we have rebelled against their and our Maker. By sin matters have been strangely inverted. That fear, that dread of man, which creatures originally had, in consequence of his being constituted their Lord, and having them under his power, is in a great measure now no more; nay, it is, as it were, transferred from them to us. Hence, instead of these standing in awe of us, we rather stand in awe of them; insomuch, that the very buzzing of a flie will alarm, the slightest motion of an insect will affright. The reason is obvious: They are in a great measure taken from under our subjection; are let loose against us, though still with some restraint. They are sometimes commissioned, in their sphere, to proclaim God's displeasure with us, and are even employed to execute his judgement against us; and however feeble the creature be which the Lord makes use of, when he utters his voice before it, that day will be very great and terrible: Who can abide it?

10. We are the servants of sin, are slaves to Satan. This is a service, a slavery, of the most distressing, debasing, and dishonourable nature; at the same time it is common to the whole of mankind. Thus, Ephes. ii. 1. 2. 3. "And you hath he quickened
 " who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in
 " time past ye walked according to the course of
 " this world, according to the prince of the power
 " of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the
 " children of disobedience. Among whom also
 " we all had our conversation in times past, in the
 " lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh,
 " and of the mind; and were by nature the chil-

"dren of wrath, even as others." The apostle, in these verses, describes the present and the former state of himself and the believing Ephesians. The latter he considers as common to the whole of mankind; and he elsewhere declares, "Ye were the servants of sin;" and when in this state, ye "were free from righteousness;" that is, were so much the servants of sin and Satan, that they were incapable of any thing else; they could not be servants unto God, or have their fruit unto holiness. Hence it appears, that we are the servants of sin, are slaves to Satan. This is a circumstance which renders our situation eminently pitiable. If our ruin at first originated from sin, and was promoted by Satan, as must be granted, certainly to be in the service of the one, to be under the influence, the controul of the other, and to be all this wilfully, as is the fact, this doubtless must be viewed as a striking ingredient in that ruin which has befallen us. While we remain in these circumstances, we must be sinking deeper and deeper in that mire where there is no standing.

11. We have deprived ourselves, and are rendered destitute of every thing that is truly good. Amidst all the ruin that has befallen us, had we any good thing remaining, this would be some alleviation of our distress; but this is by no means the case. Man having presumptuously aspired to the enjoyment of greater good than his bountiful Creator had seen meet to assign him; he in that attempt deprived himself, and all his posterity with him, of that good which he once possessed. He rendered himself and them wholly destitute of every thing desirable. In our natural estate, we are estranged from every real comfort, from all true happiness. We indeed are too much disposed to think otherwise; we would persuade ourselves, "that we are rich and increased with goods, that
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"we have need of nothing." But the verdict of the God of truth, in relation to us, proves quite the reverse, and pronounces us to be "wretched" and "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." We stand in need of all things; we are fatherless and friendless; God is our enemy; the whole creation is against us. What is still more affecting, the bounties of common providence are not real blessings to us, or do they prove satisfactory in enjoyment. There is a curse which is entailed upon, which adheres to every thing, and which, in its nature, in its operation, serves to im-bitter, and to impoverish, all that is enjoyed: so that, while in this state, we are without question alienated from the life of God. — We have only to add,

In the *last* place, That we are under a continued exposure to all evil, both in this and in a coming world; thus we are in circumstances which, when put together, constitute complete wretchedness. We are not only ruined in the powers of the soul, and in the members of the body, we have not only lost our strength, but have also put our best friends far from us, and are altogether friendless. Our misery is farther aggravated by our having rendered God our adversary, and raised the whole creation in arms against us. As if all this was not enough, we have enlisted ourselves in the service of sin and Satan; we have spurned away, and hence have become destitute of every thing that is truly good. To complete the detail of our wretchedness, we are under a continued exposure to all evil. By the entrance of sin, death, with all its dreary associates, found a passage into the world. It has ever since assumed and exercised a relentless sway over the sons of men. We are for the present subject to innumerable disorders, both in the soul and in the body; are environed with, and exposed

to a thousand nameless ills; while we are uncertain when these may seize upon us, or to what extent they may prevail. But this is not the worst circumstance in our situation. Hell from beneath is opened wide to devour us; the thunderbolts of incensed justice are in readiness to be hurled down upon our guilty heads; and if we continue finally disobedient, the wrath of God, in all its tremendous energy, will be poured out upon us! The worm that dieth not, the flame that shall never be quenched, must be the portion of our cup, and that for ever! All which being considered, a most awful, a most affecting scene, presents itself to us. In reviewing it, we may well exclaim, *The crown has fallen from off our head: Woe is unto us.*

S E R -

S E R M O N II.

HOSEA, xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

HAVING discussed what we had to offer upon the first two heads in our method, we go on,

III. To make good the charge here exhibited, and this by shewing how we have destroyed ourselves, and are still farther hastening on our ruin. We begin with observing,

1. That, as our ruin originated from the first trespass, so it is heightened by those actual transgressions which proceed from thence. The sacred volume assures us, and, in the nature of things, it is obvious, that we have fallen by iniquity. The one is, without doubt, the offspring of the other. If the question should be, What is that iniquity from whence our ruin has issued, and by which it is promoted? it is obvious, that the answer must be as we have just now expressed it. In its commencement, our ruin must be traced to the first trespass, the one offence of the first man, when sustaining the character, and acting in the capacity of a federal head and representative to all his posterity descending from him by ordinary generation. It doubtless proceeded from the violation of that covenant.

venant-transaction which God entered into with Adam, which, while in its nature it proposed life to the obedient observer, denounced death and destruction upon the guilty transgressor. It was this which was the source of ruin to Adam himself, and is no less so to the whole of mankind, as relatively and really connected with him in that transaction. The moment that Adam failed in fulfilling his engagements to his great Creator in this covenant, he found himself naked, became guilty, was afraid, and hid himself from the presence of the Lord God. As Adam was thus ruined, so were all his posterity. His failure equally affected them as it did himself. In all justice, it behoved to do so. He was an actor, a transgressor, no less for them than for himself; and with propriety might be so, in regard the glorious Creator, who had full power to this end, constituted him in that character and capacity, which necessarily produced this issue. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" Rom. v. 12. "By the offence of one, judgement hath come upon all men to condemnation;" Rom. v. 18. "In Adam all die;" 1 Cor. xv. 22. "Death hath reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" Rom. v. 14.

As our ruin commenced with the first trespass, so it is advanced and promoted by those innumerable actual transgressions which proceed from thence; and this in proportion as these prevail. The disobedience of the first man not only constituted us guilty; it also imparted to us natures corrupt, defiled; from whence flow those various evils which discover themselves in our thoughts, in our words, and in our whole conduct; every instance of which, and more especially

cially when viewed complexly, produces, as its native fruit, destruction to and upon the sinner. "The wages of sin is death;" "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." You will observe, that these words not only import, that final ruin must befall the impenitent transgressor; they also point out to us, that the moment a person becomes a sinner, and as often as he does so, he entails upon himself, and becomes liable unto that death, that wrath, which is due to every transgression. He is thus "treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath," and the revelation of the righteous judgement of "God." Hence it appears, that our ruin, in all the extent of the expression, is derived from the first trespass; and as proceeding from thence, so it is hastened on by those actual transgressions with which we are chargeable. But to be more particular.

2. Unbelief is that from whence our ruin at first commenced, and by which it still is promoted. Sin is only a single syllable, but it is a large word, comprehends a great deal under it. It is impossible for finite minds to declare how much is included, how many particulars are contained under the expression, *the sinner*. Who can understand his errors? Unbelief, however, of all evils, deserves the pre-eminence, and doubtless is to be considered as a chief and distinguished source of our ruin. It was this which, in an eminent manner, brought ruin upon Adam and all his posterity. It was this which was the commencement of, and a chief ingredient in, the first trespass. Had not unbelief prevailed, Satan could not have triumphed, and our safety would not have been endangered. It was a despising the authority of Jehovah; a disregarding his word; a rebelling against his precept; a pouring contempt upon his threatening; a murmuring against his providence; and

a listening to the suggestions of Satan : It was this which made way for that which followed, procured and produced that misery into which Adam and all his posterity then became involved.

The progress and consummation of that destruction, as well as its commencement, is, in like manner, to be accounted for from this evil. Unbelief is the avowed enemy, both of God and of mankind. It is an enemy that ought much to be dreaded; danger may ever be apprehended from this quarrel; it works so secretly, so subtilly, and assumes such different and opposite disguises; it transfuses its influence through every power of the soul, and so artfully, as well as actively exerts itself in every instance, that we cannot be sufficiently upon our guard against its attacks. It sometimes, nay often overcomes, ere persons are aware of its approaches; and where-ever it prevails, it without question involves in ruin. It darkens the understanding, defiles the conscience, perverts the will, corrupts and disorders the affections. It ruins all the powers of the soul, and effectually debilitates the whole man; it puts God far away from us, provokes his indignation; it prevents us from discerning the glory of God in his dispensations, and restrains his working in, his working for us. It produces disobedience to the divine will in the promise, in the precept; leads out to a resisting his kind intreaty by the gospel, to reject his wholesome counsel; and prevails to our refusing the Saviour that employment, that entertainment which he is requiring from us. In short, it occasions Jehovah's swearing in his wrath, that persons shall not enter into his rest. It thus involves in the deepest wretchedness; nay, unbelief is of so ruining a tendency, that it is the only damning sin: "He that believeth shall be saved: but he that believeth not

"not is condemned already." The wrath of God hath passed upon him to condemnation.

3. Pride and presumption are evils by whose influence and operation we have destroyed ourselves, and are still farther hastening on our ruin. There is nothing more hateful in itself, or more abominable in the sight of God, than pride. Allied to this is presumption. As these are hateful in their nature, so, in their tendency, they are most dangerous and destructive. It was these which at first brought ruin upon mankind. Our first parents, not content with that humble, though exalted sphere in which they had been placed by their bountiful Creator, wished to be as God; and hence presumptuously aspired to the place of him that is most high. Their pride and presumption thus operating, brought them very low; plunged them, and all their posterity with them, into an abyss of wretchedness. As thus it was at the first, it still continues to be. There are no greater enemies to God and man than pride and presumption; nor are there any evils which are more fatally instrumental in effecting our ruin. In so far as these prevail, they render God our enemy. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." Besides, they give an importance, an ability to a person which he by no means possesses; and thus makes him presume upon doing impossibilities, which must issue both in his ruin and disgrace. They blind the eyes; they harden the heart; they manage an opposition to the Lord's providential and gracious dispensations; they will not be indebted to free grace, though this alone is effectual to counteract that ruin which mankind have brought upon themselves; they will not either submit to the
D righteousness,

righteousness, or will they be subject to the rule, of the glorious Redeemer. They may have an acceptable approach to the throne of grace: "While the Lord giveth grace to the humble, he resisteth the proud;" he sends them empty away. Nay, such is the influence that pride and presumption have with and upon persons, that, rather than those Babel buildings, their own fancied dignity and independence, which they wish to have supported, should, in the smallest degree, be undermined, they will persevere in their present wicked, wretched condition, and thus increase it. There is indeed nothing which tends more to embitter enjoyments, to hasten on ruin, and deeply to involve in it, than pride. The reason is obvious: It so disguises matters, so infatuates, and incapacitates persons, that nothing other can be expected. "Every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."

4. A perverseness and obstinacy of disposition is that by which we have been brought into deep waters, and are still farther sinking in that mire in which there is no standing. This is without question the fact. Hence our ruin is frequently in Scripture stated to this account. Thus the Psalmist, Psal. lxxxix. 11. 12. "My people would not hearken to my voice: and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust: and they walked in their own counsels." It was a complaint which Jesus exhibited: John, v. 40. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Matth. xxiii. 37. 38. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." There is nothing which

which is more hurtful to our interests, either temporal or spiritual, and which more effectually promotes our ruin, than a wilful perverseness, an unreasonable obstinacy of disposition. When this prevails, it makes persons insensible to their present misery, proof against warnings and threatenings in relation to what is future. It renders them deaf to all calls, all intreaties, and, in short, impregnable by every thing whatever; so that often they awake not from the delusion, till sudden destruction has overtaken them, and they cannot escape. What is truly remarkable is, that the more alarming the danger is, and the nearer the period when the awful stroke shall be executed, it often happens, that the perverseness, the obstinacy of persons, become more aggravated and more increased, instead of being lessened, as might naturally be expected. Thus, in the case of the old world, and the inhabitants of Sodom; when Noah and Lot remonstrated with them as to that danger, that destruction which was impending, and ready to overwhelm them; so wilful, so perverse were all, and even Lot's sons-in-law, that they seemed to them as persons who mocked; and hence their obstinacy destroyed them. Thus will it be with every impenitent transgressor: "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed; and that without remedy;" Prov. xxix. 1.

5. Our ignorance, our lack of knowledge, is that by which we have destroyed, and are still farther ruining ourselves. Too many there are who reckon their ignorance, their safety, who delude themselves with the apprehensions that their lack of knowledge will be a sufficient apology for their lack of service, or their chargeableness with evil doing. But, my brethren, this is a vain, a foolish thought. Were there not sufficient means of knowledge afforded, and proper directions fur-

nished to lead to a suitable improvement of these; did our duty and interest not clearly concur to point out how indispensably important the acquisition of knowledge is; in such circumstances, ignorance would in some degree be excusable. But when the reverse is without question the fact, then it is obvious our lack of knowledge must be highly criminal, most dangerous, and this in proportion as it prevails. The Lord, by the prophet Hosea, as applicable to the children of Israel, expressly points out this, chap. iv. vers. 6. "My people," says he, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." However little this may be understood, there is nothing more prejudicial than ignorance. In its nature it is a transgression of the divine law; and hence brings under that death which is the wages of sin. In its influence and tendency it is strikingly pernicious. When ignorant of God, we cannot give unto him that glory which is his due; we must be deeply chargeable with dishonouring him. While without the knowledge of Christ, we will not improve him as the Saviour from sin and wrath. As estranged from the Holy Spirit, we must be chargeable with quenching the motions, and with doing despite to the Spirit of all grace. Having no proper acquaintance with the gospel of Christ, we are exposed to the ravages of error, and are ready to be led about by every wind of doctrine. Being without a distinct knowledge of our duty, we must necessarily be guilty of repeated aggravated omissions. Destitute of suitable apprehensions in relation to our best interests, these can never be duly consulted; they must be habitually neglected. When unacquainted with our real situation, we will be secure and insensible, though exposed to the most imminent danger. While we have no proper knowledge of the danger to which we are exposed, we rush headlong upon

upon it; we cannot take measures to provide against it. As being ignorant of the defiling nature, the high demerit of sin, we go frowardly on from evil to worse, to our eternal undoing. In short, being without a spiritual discernment as to the nature of true happiness, we can never pursue after it; we must be estranged from the enjoyment of it. Thus it is that ignorance promotes our ruin; besides, it exposes unto, and, if finally persisted in, will inevitably involve in everlasting destruction. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that *know not God*, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

6. Another source of our ruin is our indolence, our inconsideration. It was a complaint which the Lord by the prophet stated against Israel, their indolence, their inconsideration: Is. i. 3. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." As there is nothing more subservient to the advancement of our interests than activity and consideration, so there is nothing which will more effectually promote our ruin, than when the reverse prevails. While the hand of the diligent maketh rich, sloth and indolence will bring to poverty, and cover with rags. Without some consideration and foresight, we cannot to purpose understand where our duty or danger lies, so as to take measures in relation to either; we must be insensible to warnings, reproofs, and threatenings; we will be equally inattentive to mercies and judgments, when these are measured out; and hence must be incapable of a suitable improvement of them: nay, we in fact will be doing nothing. And it is to be attended to, the more that indolence

lence prevails, the more inconsiderate will we become; and the more inconsiderate we are, the more will indolence grow upon us. Such is the influence that these evils have with and upon each other. The most fatal consequences arise from their prevalence in persons: "Because they regard
" not the works of the Lord, nor the operations
" of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not
" build them up;" Psal. xxviii. 5.

7. An inordinate love to the world, and the things of it, is also that which eminently involves in destruction. There is nothing which in its nature and tendency is more pernicious than this; and it is the more dangerous from this consideration, that instead of having the appearance of effecting our ruin, as it clearly does, we are too ready to be deluded with the apprehension that in attending to its influence and operation, we are consulting our real interests. Indeed, were a regard to the world, and the things of it, under proper subordination, it would in so far subserve our interests; but it is always too forward to inroach beyond its sphere, what is its due. The world rivals it with God; each would possess the pre-eminency in the affections. — Both cannot. — Where therefore the one has it, the other must necessarily be excluded. And if the world possesses the chief room in the heart, it does so to the entire exclusion of our having the smallest love to God in the heart; nay, it renders us an enemy to him. Whoso loveth the world, that is with a supreme affection, the love of the Father is not in that person. The Apostle James expressly declares, chap. iv. 4. "The friendship of the world is enmity
" with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend
" of the world, is the enemy of God." If then friendship with the world produces an enmity betwixt God and us, it must be of a ruinous nature and tendency. The smallest attention to the matter will
soon

soon convince as to this. What powerful influence have the pleasures, the profits, the riches, the honours of a present world, to seduce from the right way! How much do these alienate the heart from God and godliness! how careless, how indifferent, do they render persons to duty and danger! how are the affections drawn out towards them, and this to the entire exclusion almost of every thing else! and hence how gradually, and yet how assuredly do they involve persons in ruin, unless they are plucked as brands out of the burning! "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;" 1 Tim. vi. 9. And it is to be adverted to, that it is not merely worldlings as such, that the world, and the things of the world, obtain the ascendancy over. The professors of religion are also too often awfully taken in this snare, to the making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. "Demas," said the apostle, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world;" 2 Tim. iv. 10. Even with the best, instead of having their affections set upon the things above, alas, how much do they cleave to the dust!

8. Our rebellion against God, our disobedience to the precepts of his holy law, at first did, and still does, produce that death, that destruction in which we are involved. This points out to us a capital source from whence our ruin issues forth. The law of God is exceeding broad,—is spiritual, and reaches to the thoughts, the intents of the heart; takes cognizance of those as well as of the words and conduct: it pronounces that person cursed who does not conform himself unto, and who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law. In these circumstances our ruin may easily be accounted for. Every disobedience, every transgression of the divine law, is powerful to produce this;

it sufficiently did so at the first, and still is fully equal for the business. No sooner did Adam disobey, than he instantly experienced the fatal consequences: he was driven out from Paradise, and became subject to that death, that destruction, which was threatened. Thus will and must it be in every instance. The law of God cannot with impunity be trampled upon. In the case of the wicked and ungodly, for every transgression, "the wrath of God cometh upon them." And even with the Lord's people themselves, though their shortcomings have not such an awful issue, yet the divine displeasure will strikingly be manifested on this ground: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him: nor suffer my faithfulness to fail;" Ps. lxxxix. 30.—34.

9. Our ruin is much owing to, and evidently promoted by our despising the divine threatenings, disregarding his warnings: The divine threatenings are not mere scarecrows to fright men from sinning; they are often uttered with a gracious design, and have always some purpose or other to accomplish, which will not fail to be rendered effectual. If, instead of being improved to our turning from the evil of our ways, and our doings that are not good, we set them at nought, bid defiance to their execution, and go frowardly on in the way of our own hearts, the consequences must be truly awful. Thus it was with Adam; and thus it will be with all his descendants in every instance. The Lord may continue to threaten for a time, may exercise his patience, his forbearance, for a season, but he will not always do so; his threatenings, when not duly regarded, will be fully realized; and the more they have been contemned, the more signally will his displeasure be

be manifested. Those warnings which from time to time he is pleased to issue forth, being of the same nature, and vouchsafed with the like intent, as the threatenings are denounced, when not duly improved, the effect as to both will be the same. It is thus our ruin is to be accounted for. "Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered;" Jer. xxxv. 17. "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day;" Jer. xlv. 4.—7. "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts," to every individual, "Consider your ways." Our ruin, in its commencement and progress might be traced to a variety of sources,—it shall suffice with those mentioned, only to add,

10. Our misimprovement of the Lord's dealings and dispensations towards us, both merciful and judicial. This in a particular manner serves to account for the distressful circumstances into which we have brought ourselves. The Lord does nothing in vain. He has always some end to accomplish by his dispensations. As he has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but wills that they should turn to him and live, this is often in so far pointed out by that work of judgement which is inflicted upon them, and which is sent, that there may be a turning to him that smiteth, a seeking the Lord of hosts. When his warnings and threatenings have been

been despised, and in consequence he might justly proceed to the making good all that he has warned of, and threatened with; yet, as being slow to anger, and of great kindness, being unwilling to make a full end at once, the Lord, as it were for a time, rests satisfied with commencing his work of judgement; and this often with a view, that by a suitable improvement of the dispensation, his progress in judgement may be stopped. He thus waits, that he may be gracious. Well, such an improvement should ever be made of his judicial procedure. In our affliction we should seek him early. When however, instead of this, we are chargeable with an evident contempt and misimprovement of his rebukes, what else can be expected, than that the Lord's anger should flame forth against us with irresistible fury, as the native and necessary demerit of such evil conduct? In like manner, when we become the burial-places of his mercies; when his goodness, either in common or special providence, instead of drawing us nearer to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, drives us farther and farther away from him; when, like Jeshurun, we wax fat and kick; when our privileges are misimproved, and we make creatures our confidence, our comfort, rather than the great Creator; when the divine kindness has not a proper effect upon us, the longer it is continued, and the more largely it is communicated, the less impression it makes upon us. In these circumstances, the Lord must be awfully provoked. It is thus that persons bring inevitable ruin upon themselves. Slighted kindness dreadfully incenses divine justice, and renders it peculiarly inexorable. "The people
" turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither
" do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the
" Lord will cut off from Israel, head and tail,
" branch and rush in one day;" Is. ix. 13. 14.
" Thou,

“Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven,
 “shalt be thrust down to hell.” “And when he
 “was come near, he beheld the city, and wept o-
 “ver it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou,
 “at least in this thy day, the things which belong
 “unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine
 “eyes;” Luke, xix. 41. 42. — Having offered
 what we had in view upon the melancholy part of
 our subject, we go on,

IV. To consider the nature of that help which is
 with God, and which is almighty to counteract
 that ruin which has befallen us. — With this view
 we may observe,

1. It is an help which is most suitable, which is
 fully calculated to repair, and more than repair
 that ruin which has befallen us. This is sufficient-
 ly attested by the glorious Redeemer himself: “I
 “am come,” says he, “that they might have life,
 “and that they might have it more abundantly;”
 John, x. 10. When mankind had destroyed them-
 selves, and could do nothing towards their recove-
 ry; if relief was proposed to them, it behoved not
 to be a partial assistance, leaving so much to their
 own exertions. A proposal of this nature would
 have been unavailing; nay, though the help pro-
 posed was of equal extent with the ruin that had
 been occasioned; yet if this was its utmost extent,
 it would have been insufficient to produce complete
 happiness to guilty men. Even though a restoration
 to their former state of uprightness was fully effected,
 yet if nothing more was or could be done for them,
 the recollection of what had befallen them, this
 circumstance alone would embitter their situation,
 from the consideration, that what had once been
 might again be. In order, therefore, to the enjoy-
 ment of complete happiness to the sons of men,
 nothing less was necessary than the reparation of
 that

that ruin which had befallen them; a restoration to their former state of uprightness, and also a security against ever falling again into the snare of the devil. Well, as all this was absolutely necessary, so that help which is in God for self-destroyers is in every respect of such a nature and extent as was required. There is no circumstance of ruin that it is not calculated to remove, and it puts in possession of greater dignities and blessings than what belonged to that state from whence we have fallen. This might be illustrated at great length. It will suffice to observe, that this help removes the natural darkness of the understanding, and makes light in the Lord; reduces the will, however perverse and rebellious, to the obedience of faith. It regulates and rectifies the corrupt and disordered affections. The conscience, which was defiled; the memory, which was impaired; the imagination, which was wholly polluted; these meet with the fullest repair from it. The whole soul is renewed after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The body also is rendered a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to reside in. That strength, which had departed from us, is, through the influence, the efficacy of this help, restored. A happy reconciliation with those friends we had put far from us is effected; deliverance from under the power of sin and Satan is ensured. In short, this help completely enriches those to whom it is extended. We have thence afforded us more, infinitely more, than we can conceive. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give

" give us all things. The Lord will give grace
 " and glory; no good thing will he withhold
 " from them that walk uprightly." And the whole
 is most firmly secured, while all whom the Father
 hath given the Redeemer, shall come unto him;
 such as do so " are kept by the power of God
 " through faith unto salvation, ready to be reveal-
 " ed in the last time."

2. It is a most sufficient help. By this we in-
 tend to express, not only that there is a suitableness
 in this help, to repair, and more than repair, that
 ruin which has befallen us, as has been alledged,
 but also that it is most sufficient, that is, fully equal
 to, and possessed of an ability for accomplishing,
 all those purposes which are in view by it. And
 farther, that there is a sufficiency in it in both re-
 spects, answerable to every individual, and to the
 innumerable multitude who betake themselves to
 it. That this is a just representation of matters
 will be obvious, when the nature of this help, and
 the glorious personage upon whom it is laid, are
 duly considered. The help itself, as has just now
 been stated, is most liberal and enlarged, is by no
 means either partial or defective; and there is no-
 thing proposed but what there is the fullest ability for
 making good. This help is laid upon one that is
 mighty; who is the Mighty God, mighty to save;
 who received the Spirit without measure, and is
 full of grace and truth; to whom nothing can be
 too hard; he works so as nothing can let him. In
 these circumstances, there is not the smallest reason
 to entertain a doubt as to any purpose or promise
 being fulfilled, any good word or work being ac-
 complished. Every disease and disorder must yield
 to the strength of the Redeemer's omnipotent arm,
 when it is exerted, and must be subject to the con-
 trol of his all-powerful grace, when it is displayed.
 All our wants may be supplied from that inex-

insatiable fulness which is in Christ; and our demands, however enlarged, may, nay, shall be complied with by that God who hath said, Open thy mouth, and open it wide, I will fill it. As there is a fulness in this help accommodated unto, and even exceeding that ruin which has befallen us; as it is every way sufficient to make good all that for which it is proposed; so this is not the fact merely in the case of some very distinguished persons who hence derive benefit, while it neither does nor can extend its kind offices any farther. By no means. Though indeed this help can be effectual in favour of those for whom it was originally intended, and those only; yet this does not arise from any insufficiency in the help itself, but is to be accounted for as an effect of divine sovereignty, who willed that thus it should be, and as occasioned through an unbelieving rejection of it by persons, when proposed to them in the dispensation of the gospel. The help itself, intrinsically considered, has an unquestionable sufficiency to counteract all that ruin which sin has brought upon the whole of mankind, and would have been fully effectual to this end, had God seen meet so to order it. Therefore no one need hesitate as to an improvement of it, under apprehensions of its insufficiency. However many may have done so already, there is yet abundant room and reason for others devising liberally upon this ground. This help will be fully sufficient for every individual who in the exercise of a lively faith lays hold upon it: Jesus saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. It is only an unbelieving rejection of his help that can make it of no avail to any person whatever. "Ye will not," says Jesus, "come to me, that ye might have life."

3. It is a most gratuitous help. This is what in a particular manner recommends it. However suitable

suitable and sufficient it might be, yet if it could only be obtained upon certain terms and conditions; if it were only to be extended to persons who could propose something towards inducing its exertion in their behalf; in such circumstances, the being made acquainted with it would afford no comfort to the sons of men, in regard it could be of no avail to them. While we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing, if any thing, however inconsiderable, were required on our part, as a moving, an influencing cause, to produce the extending this help towards us, we for ever might despair of deriving benefit from thence, in regard what was required could never be realised by us. But what commends this help as worthy of God, what should render it high in the estimation of sinners, is, that it is absolutely sovereign, and divinely free. There was nothing in any of the sons of men, or foreseen to be in them, that was or could be a meritorious cause or reason of Jehovah's proposing or providing this help. It was when they were viewed as "lying in their blood, cast out into the open field," "to the loathing of their own persons;" when there was nothing amiable, nothing inviting in them or about them, but quite the reverse, that it was said unto them, "Live;" and as there was nothing in them to influence an interposition in their behalf, so neither could any thing foreseen as to be in them, or done by them, have efficacy to this. All the good that is ever to be found with any, is wholly the effect of this help, as exercised in and towards them; and all know that nothing can be the cause of itself.

4. It is a present help, what is near at hand, and easily got at. This is another of its distinguishing excellencies. However suitable and sufficient this help was, and even though it was most gratuitous, yet if it was at a considerable distance, or not easily

got at; we could derive little benefit from it. But this is by no means the case: While it is most suitable, sufficient, and gratuitous, it is at the same time a present help: "The Lord is a present help in time of trouble." He is near to all "that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." We have not to ascend up into heaven, to bring Christ from above; neither have we to descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead; the word is nigh us, that is, the word of faith, which we preach. It is brought near, so near as that it is within our reach. It is brought to the door of our hearts, insists for admission, for entertainment from us; and this in so particular, so peremptory terms, that there is no alternative left, we must either receive or reject it. And as this help is near at hand, so it is easily got at. There is no great toil or labour required to our becoming possessed of it. We have only to ask, and we shall receive; nay, we have only to receive and improve it, in the exercise of a lively faith: According to our faith, so shall it be unto us. And, my brethren, it is specially to be adverted to, that this help is not present, near at hand, and easily got at, merely at some seasons, or only on some pressing emergency, but is so at all times, and to persons in every situation whatever, while the season of grace, the day of merciful visitation, is continued with them. Hence in the verse it is observable, it is not stated, in me *may, can, should, or shall*, be thy help, but *in me is thy help*; intimating, that no sooner should help be required, than it would be afforded; for it was ready, and only waited an opportunity for being communicated. This is without question the fact. The Lord waits that he may be gracious: he wants employment from us, and is ever ready to interpose in our behalf. His gracious direction is, "See that ye call upon me in the day of trouble;" and the gracious

gracious assurance is, "I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Pl. l. 15.; nay, so forward is he in offering his all-sufficient help, that he thus addresses us, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" in effect signifying, that, be the employment what it will that may be presented to him, if it can be done in a consistency with his own glory and the person's good, he will most willingly and instantly engage in it, and in due time perfect what concerns him.

5. It is an abiding help. This, if well-founded, must render it truly desirable. After all that has been observed in relation to it, if nothing farther could be added, the comfort and consolation arising hence could not be complete. Persons might in justice thus reason: We admit that this help commends itself to us from a variety of considerations; in particular, from its being an help which is most suitable, sufficient, gratuitous, near at hand, and easily got at. But though all this be, what does it avail? It is not the whole of what we stand in need of. We are weak and helpless; we can do nothing; we require not only assistance for the present, we must also have a continued, an abiding support, without which, what for the present may be done for us will profit nothing. If ever left to ourselves, to our own management, matters will go as far wrong as ever; and therefore we must in continuance be taken care of. Whatever, therefore, you have said, or can say, of this help, if you cannot assure us of its abiding with us for ever, we cannot make it fully welcome; but once make this good, and then you render it truly desirable, you afford a solid ground of comfort. Well, my brethren, nothing is more easy than to establish this. Says the apostle, Be content with such things as ye have; for Jehovah hath said it, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Jesus

comforted his disciples with an assurance of the everlasting continuance of the Father, himself, and the Holy Spirit, with them. The Psalmist informs us, that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto childrens children." Indeed this help requires that it should be of an abiding nature, an enduring continuance; the work could not ever be managed to any good effect, were there not continued exertions afforded in the person's behalf; and as necessary, so this is undoubtedly the case. The Lord is a rock, and his work is perfect. Where-ever he commences this help, he continues his assistance, and never leaves off working in the person's behalf, till he perfects what concerns him. "The hands of Zerubabel having laid the foundation, his hands will also finish the building. He will bring forth the head-stone with shoutings, saying, Grace, grace unto it."

6. It is an help which is proposed unto all in a gospel-dispensation, to the entire benefit of which the chief of sinners are invited, and made fully welcome. This help was planned and provided, that it might be extended to some; and that it might be extended to these, it is exhibited to all in a gospel-dispensation. The gracious call is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." The glorious Redeemer proclaims, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour." This help is not proposed to persons who can in part help themselves, or who, in respect of some worthiness they can claim, are in so far intitled to assistance; for there are none such among the human race. It is offered unto all, without exception, in a gospel-dispensation: "Unto you, O men, I call," says the personal wisdom of God, "and my voice is

"is to the sons of men." The chief of sinners are without question made welcome. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It is an help even for self-destroyers, as in our text. It is presented to the stout-hearted, and the far from righteousness; nay, that no one might have ground of hesitation in improving it, the invitation is most enlarged, and even unlimited: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." *"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."* This, then, is an help open to all; from the benefit of which none are excluded but such as by their unbelief exclude themselves. It is offered freely and fully. We have not a price to bring in our hands to procure it. If we propose this, we shall be resisted, instead of being relieved. We must be wholly indebted to this help, otherwise we can in no respect experience its benefit. Christ will have all the employment, and all the glory, or he will not engage in working for us. We must submit to the efficacy of his righteousness, and be subject to his rule in us, if we would not rush headlong upon destruction.

7. It is an help, which has been well proved, and which meets with the fullest approbation from all who have done so. This help does not commend itself merely from those expressions or descriptions which may be offered; it is peculiarly distinguished by the particular, the extensive benefit which in every succeeding period it has actually afforded. There has been frequent recourse had to this help, and in every instance it has fully gratified all the expectations which were entertained. The more that persons stood in need of its assistance, the more liberal their expectations from it were, the greater was the benefit

benefit which they experienced, the better tried, the more excellent and sufficient it approved itself to be. All the saints will unite in attesting this. If we appeal to the Psalmist, his testimony is clearly in its favour. Says he, "I was brought low, and he helped me." "I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me." Samuel set up his Ebenezer as a continued memorial, that the Lord had been and was an helper unto him. To the same purpose, the apostle Paul declares, "I obtained mercy." In short, were we to consult the experience of every individual Christian, it would uniformly subserve to express the same thing. They would all unite in proclaiming, that "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous run thither, and are safe." This help, as being so well proved, as meeting with so much approbation from those who have done so; this, while it declares its excellency, at the same time commends it to us, and points out the obligations we are under to improve it, according to need. Hence the apostle, "I obtained mercy. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting:" in other words, intimating, from what he had experienced, that all who were made acquainted with it might be induced, nay were under obligations, to make an improvement for themselves of that gracious help which was provided for them in Christ Jesus.—We have only to observe,

8. It is an help which is indispensably necessary to the present and eternal welfare of mankind. This is what should in an especial manner render it precious in our esteem, and lead to an improvement of it. However valuable this help otherwise were, if it might be dispensed with, then, though

though it did not meet with a becoming entertainment, persons could not be pronounced so blameable, as they must be, when it is understood to be indispensably necessary. That it is so, is unquestionable. Mankind having destroyed themselves, and being unable to do the smallest thing towards their recovery, they must have perished, had not Jehovah interposed in their behalf. There was no eye to pity, or hand to help; all refuge failed us; and therefore we irrecoverably must have gone down to the pit of perdition, had not our help been laid upon one that was mighty, and hence deliverance brought us.

Having considered the nature of the sin, and the extent of the guilt, we are now to consider the manner in which the Lord has provided for the redemption of his people.

V. To shew that the Lord has provided for the redemption of his people, we shall consider the following particulars: 1. The nature of the redemption. 2. The manner of the redemption. 3. The extent of the redemption.

1. The nature of the redemption. The redemption is a deliverance from all iniquity, and from all unrighteousness, and from all the power of Satan, and from all the wrath of God, and from all the curse of the law.

2. The manner of the redemption. The redemption is effected by the blood of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, and who has given himself as a ransom for all men.

3. The extent of the redemption. The redemption is for all men, who are willing to believe in Jesus Christ, and who are baptized in his name.

The redemption is a free gift, and is not purchased by any works of men. It is a gift of God's grace, and is not earned by any merit of man.

The redemption is a complete deliverance, and is not a partial one. It is a deliverance from all sin, and from all the consequences of sin.

S E R M O N III.

HOSEA, xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.

HAVING considered the nature of that help which is almighty to counteract the effects of the ruin which has befallen mankind, we now proceed,

V. To instruct, That this help is wholly in, with, and from the Lord. This we hope will be evident, if the following particulars are attended to.

I. It is a rich display of boundless grace, and would not have been effectual unless it had been such. The help which self-destroyers stood in need of was such as rendered the existence and exercise of infinite love and grace indispensably necessary. It required love and grace so rich, so boundless in its nature, as could be found no where else than with God himself. There was such condescension necessary, such indignities and injuries to overcome, such sufferings to endure, and such work to accomplish, in rendering the whole effectual, that nothing short of infinite love could suffice. Well, as this was necessary, so in this help there is a rich display of boundless grace, reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ; and therefore it must be as has been stated. The proposal of this help originated

ginated entirely from the free love and favour of God towards the sons of men. God was under no obligation, even the smallest, to entertain any such purpose. Justice demanded quite the reverse. He might have glorified himself, if so he had seen meet, in suffering the whole of the human race to have continued in that state of sin and misery into which they had brought themselves. Even though reparation could have been made independent of the divine interposition, it was entirely at his pleasure, whether he would allow this or not. But when no such thing was or could be proposed, when he was so grievously dishonoured, and when such complicated ruin was brought upon mankind, who had destroyed and could not help themselves; in these circumstances, all motion towards their relief could only proceed from God, and, as proceeding from him, must necessarily be a rich display of divine love, of love which in its nature was absolutely sovereign and divinely free, having nothing on their part to induce or influence its exercise. But not only was boundless grace displayed in proposing help for rebellious man, it was also specially conspicuous in devising, in delineating the method of their relief. It could only be love passing all comprehension that could excite infinite wisdom to devise such an expedient as has been proposed; and it is to be traced to the same inexhaustible source, that the expedient proposed was actually gone into. When contemplating this subject, well may we, with the apostle, exclaim, "God is love. Herein
" is love, not that we loved God, but that he lo-
" ved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation
" for our sins. God so loved the world, that he
" gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-
" lieveth on him, might not perish, but have eter-
" nal life. Scarcely for a righteous man will one
" die; yet peradventure for a good man some
" would

"would even dare to die: but God commendeth
his love towards us, in that while we were yet
sinners, Christ died for us."

12. It is the unquestionable result of infinite wisdom, and could not have been effectual unless it had been such. That ruin which mankind had brought upon themselves was of such a nature and extent, that it was not easily repaired. It required no less an exertion than that of infinite wisdom to devise and delineate the method of our recovery. Hence, by the apostle, it is pointed out as the manifold wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery. There were such various and opposite interests to attend to, such difficulties and obstructions to encounter; there were such depths of misery to be brought from, such heights of enjoyment to be raised unto; and, in short, there was so much to be done, and such opposition managed to the doing of it, as was more than sufficient utterly to confound, and inextricably to embarrass, the limited skill and wisdom of finite capacities. In such perplexing circumstances, if left to themselves, they could by no means perceive relief practicable; and even though they had been assured that it was practicable, but were left to devise the method of their relief, they were equally incapable for this. It was a work far exceeding the utmost stretch of human, or even angelic wisdom, to have pointed out an unexceptionable method through which an offended God and offending sinners might again be in a state of reconciliation with each other; how mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other; and as they were incapable of determining the practicability, or devising the method of our relief, it is no less certain, that that method of our relief which was devised and delineated, is such as far transcends any thing which mortals were capable of, and

and clearly proclaims itself to be a display, an illustrious display of infinite wisdom. Could it, my brethren, ever have entered into the conceptions of men or angels, that that God who had been so highly injured and offended, whose justice demanded that deserved judgement should be inflicted upon the guilty transgressor; could it, we say, ever have been considered by them as possible, that he would take upon him the charge and management of that relief which was necessary to the happiness of self-destroyers? Certainly not. Even though it had been possible that such a supposition could have arisen in the mind, yet doubtless it was utterly incomprehensible how it could be. The whole, without question, must be allowed to be the device of the manifold wisdom of God; and unless it had been such, our help could never have been found out. This is so undeniable, that the more we understand and contemplate the matter, the more abundant reason we will have for joining issue with the apostle in exclaiming, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh. Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!"

3. It is the glorious effect of Almighty power, and could not, in its full extent, have existed, unless it had been such. The work of our salvation was so arduous and difficult, that it required, not only infinite wisdom to devise and delineate the method of our relief, but also demanded the exertion of Almighty power, as indispensably necessary for its accomplishment. Mankind themselves could do nothing towards their recovery; they were altogether without strength. The abilities of angels were quite unequal to the work. As it surpassed the utmost stretch of finite wisdom, either to de-

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termine the practicability, or devise a method for our relief; so it exceeded their utmost exertions to accomplish it, even though a method had been pointed out. At any rate, it is obvious, that they were utterly incapable to accomplish that plan and method which was devised. As this was the unquestionable result of infinite wisdom, so the carrying it into execution was a work for which Almighty power alone was competent. In accomplishing our salvation, there were such burdens to bear, so many enemies to encounter, such difficulties and opposition to surmount, and, in short, such a variety of interests and concerns to manage, that the work could only be undertaken by one that was mighty, who works so as none, nothing can let him. Well, as this was necessary, it is evident "our Redeemer was strong; the Lord of
 "hosts is his name. He travailed in the greatness
 "of his strength, and was mighty to save. He
 "trode the wine-press alone, and of the people
 "there was none with him. His own arm brought
 "salvation, and his fury it upheld him." He did not faint or was discouraged, till, in the fullest sense of the expression, he had finished the work which was given him to do; and unless he had engaged in the undertaking, our relief could never have become effectual.

4. It is the Lord that makes persons acquainted with this help as provided, and with their absolute need of it. Though an help was provided, and which was in every respect suitable and sufficient, yet if it was wholly concealed from public view, or at the least so faintly revealed, that few or none would profit by the discovery, it could not be much accounted of. Even though it was ever so distinctly revealed, and persons were made fully acquainted with it, yet still it would not be of much importance to them, if they were in no need of it; or
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though they stood in absolute need, yet remained altogether insensible as to their situation. Help can only be valuable to persons when they are in circumstances that require it, and are sensible of this, when they are made acquainted with the suitability and sufficiency of what is proposed; and certainly he who does all this for them is justly intitled to the credit of affording them help. Well, this is what the Lord does to sinners, self-destroyers. He has not only provided a help, but also he makes persons fully acquainted with its suitability and sufficiency, and brings to a sensibility of their absolute need of it. In doing this he employs various means and instruments; and it is no disparagement to him, as the great worker, that he does so; nay, the work could not otherwise be so readily carried on. It is, however, to be observed, that these means and instruments of themselves can do nothing; it is only in so far as God works by and with them, that they can have effect. It is the Lord himself that has the key of the heart, the command of the understanding; and therefore were he not to exert his influence and authority, all the efficacy that means and instruments could employ would be unavailing. However undoubted it is, that persons stand in need of this help, that it is exactly suited unto, and sufficient for them; though this was stated with all the plainness and perspicuity language is capable of; with all the earnestness and energy the human mind possesses; and though every finite exertion was employed with a view to produce conviction, yet the whole would be insufficient; persons would notwithstanding remain unacquainted with the blessing and their need of it. Hence it is that with those whose hearts the Lord has not opened, whose understanding he has not enlightened; whatever speculative notions such may have of this help, and their need of it, yet they

know nothing in relation to either, as it ought to be known; and thence it is that they are careless and secure while destruction is impending, and are pouring contempt upon that which, did they understand its value, would be inestimably prized and continually improved by them. It is the Lord alone that brings persons to an acquaintance with this help, and their need of it: he has made a revelation of it in the word; and by his Spirit he makes an illustrious display of it in the heart, makes persons fully acquainted with the blessing, and their need of it. All who are thus privileged will readily admit, that the whole was the doing of the Lord, and as such wondrous in their eyes; that nothing less would have been sufficient to bring to this enjoyment. Such will allow that they were unimpressed with their situation, and would have remained so, had not Jesus taken them into the wilderness, and by his alluring and efficacious voice opened for himself their hearts. When he did so, matters appeared quite different from what they ever before did: they heard and felt him speak, who speaks as never man spake; who, while he spake, gave them an understanding to know, and improve him as the Redeemer sent to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and captivated their hearts to the obedience of faith. This leads to observe,

5. It is the Lord that determines, that enables persons to a suitable improvement of this help. It is not only necessary that persons be made acquainted with this help as provided, and also with their need of it; but also that they be determined and enabled to a suitable improvement of it. Without the latter the former will be unavailing. Well, this is what Jehovah does for self-destroyers; and thence, with propriety, it may be said, that their help is in, with, and from him. He not only brings persons to the knowledge of this help, and
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their absolute need of it; but he also determines and enables to a suitable improvement of it; and his doing so is highly requisite. However much we were acquainted with the blessing, and our need of it; yet such is our situation by nature, that we can do nothing of ourselves, and so are incapable of profiting by the discovery. Besides, we are not only incapable, but we are equally unwilling. The natural pride, the legal bias of the heart, rise up in opposition to this help, however suitable and necessary it is. While these prevail, persons are entirely unwilling to be indebted to this help, or at least to be wholly so: but if we would at all, we must be wholly indebted to it; and to this end the natural pride, the legal bias of the heart, must be brought down. This is and only can be the doing of the Lord. It is only in the day of his power that persons become willing: as the Lord disposes so, so he gives an ability for an improvement of this help; he works in persons both to will and to do. In further confirmation of what we have now stated, we may with confidence appeal to the experience of those who have obtained mercy; such will readily acknowledge, that their having fled to this refuge, their having laid hold on this hope as set before them, was neither of, from, or by themselves: they will allow, that if left to their own management, however much in need of this help, however suitable and sufficient it was; yet they would never have given it a proper entertainment, as being without all inclination and ability to this; and therefore their having done so, was the doing of the Lord, and as such, wondrous in their eyes. We may add, that all who think or speak in different terms, evidently betray their ignorance as to the real nature of this help, and what belongs to a suitable improvement of it for their benefit.

6. It is the Lord that renders this help fully effectual in the experience of all those who betake themselves unto it: He not only makes persons acquainted with the blessing, and their need of it; gives an ability and inclination for a suitable improvement of it; but also he renders it fully effectual in the experience of those who are laying hold upon it, and doing all this, it may well be said, that our help is in, with, and from him. This last is no less necessary than any of the former instances of his kindness. However much acquaintance we might have with this help and our need of it; whatever improvement, in relation to it, might be attempted; yet the whole would be unavailing, if it did not answer our expectation, and fully subserve all those purposes for which it was proposed, and on account of which we have betaken ourselves unto it. But the Lord is careful that it shall not ever in any instance disappoint: he will render it fully effectual to every purpose for which it is proposed to be subservient; he will commence the work of salvation, he will carry it forward in all its varied progress, and he will at length bring it to an happy conclusion; when the head-stone shall be put on with shoutings, grace, grace unto it. In no situation which such are, or may be in, will he be far from helping them: he will give grace, and he will give glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly: he will not cease caring for them, and working in them, till, in the fullest sense of the expression, he has perfected what concerns them.

7. Jehovah claims the affording of help to self-destroyers, as his sole province and prerogative; and thence it must be wholly in, with, and from him. Thus in our text, and to the same purpose elsewhere: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name"

"name under heaven" given among men whereby "we must be saved." Jehovah proclaims himself to be the just God and a Saviour; and while he does so, he certifies that *there is none else beside him*. In all which places there is clearly intimated, both that our help is in, with, and from the Lord, and also is so in such manner as to exclude all other interposition whatever. He may justly claim the glory of it as his due. This is so much his province and prerogative, that he will not suffer his glory in this instance to be given to another. He will admit of no rivals or assistants in the work. It must be wholly his doing, otherwise it cannot in any view be from him. He is so jealous of his glory, as the great worker in our salvation, that he will by no means admit the smallest incroachment to be made upon it. He will stain the pride of all glory, that he himself alone may be exalted. And it is to be adverted unto, that while Jehovah will not suffer unpunished such an insult to be offered him, the attempt would be most unavailing and impracticable. It doubtless will by no means be alledged, that we can do the whole; and to propose that our help should arise partly from God, and partly from the creature, is no less foolish and presumptuous. Salvation must be wholly of God, or wholly from the creature. It must either be of grace, or by works; and "if by grace, then it cannot be by works; otherwise grace is no more grace: or if by works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work." These are in their nature so different, and so opposite, that they can never be blended together to the production of any event. The operations of him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, is so superior and distinguished from any thing that feeble creatures are capable of, that they can never unite in working. This would so derogate from the one,
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and so dignify the other, that in the nature of things it is impossible. We would not, however, be understood as asserting, that the creature did nothing whatever; for we are required to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling: but in this case there is not creature-working, properly so called, but God working in persons both to will and to do, and so working by them, while it is no disparagement to his working that he does so. There is a vast difference betwixt this and the creature working independent of him. When this last is the case, the result can be nothing other than folly, weakness, and wickedness. But to propose having these united with displays of infinite power, wisdom, and holiness, in order to the promoting any design whatever, is most absurd, must be most preposterous. — We shall only add,

8. In the last place, That many have sought and found help in the Lord while they could find it no where else; nay, all that ever were brought into a state of safety have been indebted wholly to divine wisdom, power, and grace, for it. And therefore what we have stated must be admitted as unquestionable. When awakened by the thunder of Mount Sinai, and alarmed by the danger to which he is exposed, various are the refuges to which a guilty sinner has recourse. The natural pride, the legal bias of the heart, most commonly lead out to a seeking after this in the way of the old covenant, by his own doings, his good resolutions, prayers, tears, and the like: and such is his attachment to this method of relief, that when one refuge fails, he has recourse to another; when one expedient does not succeed, he attempts a different one. But in pursuing after these, he only wearies himself in the greatness of his way. By all the pains that he employs he can obtain no solid relief. When disappointed in every other quarter, and almost despairing

ing of relief, the person, as an outcast ready to perish, seeks and finds that help in the Lord, the Redeemer, which he could find no where else. Jesus saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Thus it is not merely as to an individual, or only some few, but also in the experience of multitudes, even of all who ever obtained solid relief. Such, while they found it here, could meet with it no where else. "By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains. Truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. You will observe in the text, it is asserted as applicable both to those who stand in need of it, and who have met with it: *In me is thine help.* Hence all who are thus privileged will give the glory where it is due. The Psalmist and the Apostle, nay, the whole of the church militant and triumphant, unite in casting the crown of their salvation at the Redeemer's feet, as having obtained all that they are and have from and through him. They will with one accord aim at singing while here, though in feeble strains; and will hereafter attune their harps on the highest string, saying, "Worship thy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."—It now only remains that,

VI. We conclude with some improvement.

This subject admits of a much more enlarged improvement than we can propose at present. We shall confine ourselves to the following hints.

1. We may hence perceive how mournful, how alarming our situation, and that of all mankind, is by nature. We are destroyed; and the ruin that has befallen us, as has been stated, is most extensive.

five. We are in circumstances that indicate the deepest wretchedness. Oh! that our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night for the slain of the children of men. With what earnestness should we cry out, as did the jailor, "What shall we do to be saved?"

2. We have hence pointed out to us, from whence our ruin has issued. This doubtless is to be traced to sin, to the original trespass, and to those actual transgressions which proceed from thence. We are sinners, and being such, are self-destroyers; we are snared in the work of our own hands. For it is iniquity in the varied shapes, the innumerable appearances which it assumes, that has been, and, if persisted in, will finally be our ruin.

3. We may hence discern how foolish and presumptuous the attempt must be to recover ourselves from that state of sinfulness and misery into which we have brought ourselves. If complete ruin has befallen us, both in soul and in body; if we are wholly without strength; if we have become the slaves of sin and Satan, have God as our enemy, and are exposed to his wrath, and to every evil, as is most undoubted; in such circumstances, we certainly are capable of nothing which can be subservient to our relief. If a person under the power of natural death can bring himself to life, and to some exertions, then may he that is morally, spiritually dead, be supposed capable of promoting his own relief; but not till then: and this is, in other words, declaring, that it can never be as of himself. In both cases there is a total inability for action; but in the latter, matters are much worse: There is not only an inability, but also there is an utter aversion, to those methods which can only be effectual to our relief, and the strongest affection to a following after those courses which, so far from repairing,

repairing, serve to involve more and more in ruin: so that the attempt to recover ourselves, however often proposed, must be most foolish and presumptuous. This is what cannot be too frequently inculcated, or too deeply impressed upon us. We are exceedingly averse to think in such manner of ourselves, as is absolutely necessary to the consulting our safety. It is no small attainment in religion, thus to judge ourselves; an attainment to which none can ever arrive, but by the special influence and operation of the Spirit and grace of God.

4. We are hence instructed, that our situation, though dangerous and alarming, is by no means desperate. A door of hope is opened up to us. Tho' we have destroyed, and cannot help ourselves, it is matter of comfort, that a most suitable and sufficient help is provided for, and presented to us. In Jehovah is the help of sinners, self destroyers: the Lord is gracious, and saith; Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. He has said, and he still says, as addressed to all under a gospel-dispensation, *in me is thine help.*

5. We may hence learn what improvement should be made of the Lord's kindness towards us in the dispensation of the gospel. Doubtless this should be in subscribing to those charges which he is stating against us, admitting that they are most just; and in taking the benefit of that gracious help which he is presenting to us; as subservient to counteract that ruin which has befallen us; receiving it as every way suitable and sufficient; cordially acquiescing in the whole, with particular application to ourselves: the soul, upon the matter, echoing the same thing as Jehovah declares; right exercise being in its nature a counterpart to those gracious dispensations with which we are favoured. While the Lord proclaims, *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help*; a suitable improvement of this gracious declaration will be nearly thus expressed:

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“ O Jehovah, true it is I have destroyed myself, and
 “ am daily hastening on my ruin. But, glory be to
 “ thy great name, in thee is my help. Thy name,
 “ as the Lord my righteousness and strength, is a
 “ strong tower : thither I run, and am safe.”

6. We may hence be ascertained of the great, the chief reason why so many perish for ever. Doubtless this specially lies in that, while they have destroyed themselves by sin, and cannot help themselves, they will not improve that relief which can only be effectual to their safety. As ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. As enemies to that help which was laid on him that is mighty, they have never recourse to it, but reject and despise it ; and when this is despised and rejected, there remains no more sacrifice for sin ; such have nothing else to expect but a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversary. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation ?

In the *last* place, We may hence conclude how inexcusable sinners are, and will be, when God arises to judgement. They have wilfully destroyed themselves, and are obstinately hastening on their ruin. Though suitable and sufficient help is provided for, and presented to them in a gospel dispensation, and not only presented, but also urgently pressed upon them ; yet they reject the divine counsel, resist his kind intreaty, and will not be indebted to the exceeding riches of his grace. They will not come to the Redeemer, that they may have life from and through him. In these circumstances, doubtless every such mouth will be stopped. God will be just when he ariseth to judgement against them. Their own consciences cannot but condemn them. “ If I had not come
 “ and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ;
 “ but now they have no cloke for their sin.”

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We shall have finished what we have to offer upon the subject, when we have addressed, 1st, Those who have some good hope, through grace, that they have fled for refuge, and have laid hold on that help which is set before them; and then, 2^{dly}, Those who are yet overwhelmed in that destruction which has befallen mankind.

To the former of these we would say, Be much employed in subscribing to and acquiescing in the charge which is exhibited. What is here stated points, with particular emphasis, to every individual, and proclaims, *Thou art the man*. A proper attention to, and improvement of it, lies in pleading guilty. You who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are under peculiar obligations to be thus exercised. It specially becomes you to be frequently reviewing, with deep and affecting concern, what you once were, what you had done, what you would still be and do, if left to yourselves; that thus you may be induced more and more to admire and adore the exceeding riches of that grace which has been displayed in redeeming your souls from destruction. It is your part to be exemplary in justifying the Lord when he is speaking, that thus you may be instrumental in bringing others to consider their ways. And you are to observe, that a suitable acquiescence in what is here stated, includes not only an acknowledgement that ye had destroyed yourselves; but also, that if matters were still under your management, ye would unceasingly be involving yourselves more and more in ruin: for what else can be supposed, were you given up to your own hearts lusts, and suffered to wander in counsels of your own devising? Bless the Lord for his distinguishing kindness and grace towards you. Who, or what hath made thee to differ from others? It was not either owing to your own exertions, or any excellency which you possess.

Jesus. The whole was the doing of the Lord; the result of infinite wisdom, power, and grace; and therefore give to the Lord the glory that is his due. Stir up all that is within you to bless his holy name. Praise him with your whole heart, for great is his mercy towards you, in delivering from the lowest hell. Study a continued improvement of this help which is in the Lord for you. Beware of ever attempting to divide the work or the glory of your salvation with the Redeemer. He is jealous of his honour, and he will not suffer the smallest incroachment made upon it to go unpunished. Your safety in every instance is only in, with, and from him. Learn, therefore, ever to be dependent upon, and to draw virtue from him, as your need requires. Be ever going through this wilderness, leaning on your beloved; going from strength to strength, from that strength you have received, in a believing improvement of it; to that strength which is in the promise, and which is treasured up in Christ for you, till ye thus arrive before the Lord in Zion. Compassionate, we beseech you, the pitiable state of perishing sinners. Improve the interest, the intercourse ye have with God at his throne of grace in their behalf. Bring the blind, the dumb, the deaf, and even the dead, to that almighty Jesus upon whom the help of self-destroyers has been laid; and as in the days of old, so still, he will heal them. Commend this help to others, in all its suitableness and sufficiency; and, in particular, from that benefit which you have received from it; the cordial welcome to it which all have afforded. Seek after that wisdom which will be effectual for making you the happy instruments in your sphere, of winning souls to the Redeemer. In short, breathe after much communion and fellowship with a Three-One God in Christ. Look and long for that uninterrupted and ineffable
intercourse

intercourse ye shall ere long enjoy. Say as the church did, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

2. We would, in conclusion, address those who are yet overwhelmed in that destruction which has befallen mankind, who are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. It is to be feared that the greater part are in this situation. They who have all along been careless and unconcerned as to spiritual and eternal interests, have every reason to conclude that it is so with them. Every individual who has not fled for refuge, and laid hold upon this help, is without doubt in these awful and alarming circumstances. We would beseech such to consider their dreadful state and situation. Whatever ease and happiness you for the present seem to enjoy, yet in fact how miserable, how wretched are you! God is your enemy; his omnipotent arm, his inflexible justice in continuance threatens to seize upon you. Hell is opening its mouth to receive you; the deep would swallow you up; the curse of God is pointed towards you; and his wrath, in all its tremendous energy, is ready to be poured out upon you. The execution of the dreadful sentence you are under, is absolutely unescapable. You, every moment, run the most dreadful risk of being thrown into eternal perdition. You are upon the brink of the dreadful precipice. If the brittle thread of your life should be broken while in such circumstances, down, down you must tumble into that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, from which there is no redemption. Oh, sinners, self-destroyers! who shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? who can stand before his indignation? who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? Be persuaded, then, before it be too late,

to make your escape, to fly from the wrath to come. Hesitate not a moment. While you have destroyed yourselves, and are wholly unable, as well as unwilling, to repair that ruin in which you are involved; while you deserve to have poured out upon you all the dreadful curses written in God's book; the Lord is gracious, and saith, Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom; in me is thine help. Unto you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, who is mighty to save; and who, as waiting to be gracious, is thus addressing you: "Look unto me, and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else." While, therefore, you have opportunity, improve it. Beware of delays. This is the great device by which our adversary the devil slays his thousands and his ten thousands. Your present, your eternal welfare is not a matter to be trifled with; if you put it off to a more convenient season, that season may never come. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the day of temptation." Let none imagine that it would be presumption in them to improve this help, to employ the mighty Saviour. This is a frequent suggestion from Satan and unbelief. It is, however, highly injurious to the Saviour, to the sinner; and therefore ought not to be listened to. The most cordial welcome is afforded to every individual. Whatever your situation and circumstances are, however aggravated your guiltiness, however complicated your misery be, without any exception as to either, the gracious declaration to you is, *In me is thine help*. The stout hearted, and the far from righteousness, are most urgently invited; nay, that none might have reason to stand aloof from that mercy and grace which is with God for the

the fatherless, Jehovah, the Father, peremptorily commands all to believe in his Son Jesus Christ. The Redeemer himself, in a gospel dispensation, stands with outstretched arms, proclaiming, "him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." Say not then, my misery is so extreme, my guilt is so aggravated, that I dare not go to the Redeemer: rather say, I must go to him; and, blessed be his glorious name, I am fully welcome. There is no other arm can bring salvation but his; no other grace can pardon and purify but that which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ. In him is my help.

Should any, after all, thus express themselves, What avails the suitableness, the sufficiency of this help, or even the cordial welcome that is afforded, when there is no ability or disposition for making that improvement of it which is necessary? Why urge a coming to the Saviour, when there is no power, no strength for so great a work? Still, my brethren, this is the suggestion of Satan, and of unbelief, whose unceasing aim is your final destruction. Why should you reason thus? True it is you are nothing, and can do nothing; you have neither a will nor an ability to help yourselves: you will, however, attend to this, that the commencement, the consummation of your relief is in and from the Lord. He it is that giveth power to the weak, and to those who are of no might he increaseth strength. In coming to the Redeemer, the Father, who sent him, will effectually draw you. In stretching out the withered arm, there will be a communication of the mighty power of God: it will become whole. Thy God commands

thy strength. In the day of power he makes willing; he works both to will and to do; and the work of faith with power: Arise, then, O sinners, self-destroyers! obey his gracious call: make him welcome, who comes in the name of God to save you. Cast yourselves, your burthens wholly upon him who is mighty to save. Improve Jesus as made of God to you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. In one word, consider, Oh, consider the awful, the inevitable issue that will follow upon an unbelieving rejection, an impenitent contempt of the help that has been provided, that is now in your offer. The Lord may exercise his patience, his forbearance with you for a little; but it will ere long be at an end; and then he will arise to judgement; the dreadful summons will be issued; he will call to the heavens from above, to the earth from below, and with tremendous authority, give orders that those who would not that he should reign over them, may be brought forth and slain before his face. The Saviour who, in a gospel-dispensation is now wooing with kindness and affection, and in accents the most melting is beseeching you to give him employment, will then appear as a roaring lion, ready to tear, to break in pieces, and none will or can deliver out of his hands. While divine justice will pursue its quarrel against you to the lowest hell; that boundless mercy, that compassion, whose bowels for the present yern towards you, will then glory in your confusion; and concur, in an eminent manner, to promote your anguish: Snarcs, fire, and brimstone, with an horrible tempest, this shall, without fail, be the portion of your cup. Such being the awful issue to which matters must inevitably arrive, unless you are found flying for refuge, and laying hold on this help

help which is set before you ; we would earnestly urge you, as the angels did Lot, "Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain."—"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

—*With much more*

THAT we have destroyed, and are
 whose increase to reveal our situation, and
 true not more undoubted than shining. It is
 however, commendable to reflect, that our situation,
 though most distressing and dangerous, is by no
 means desperate. Though we cannot help our
 situation, yet we can help ourself. Will and from

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him the rich rewards and glorious joys as to be
 found. A glorious, an everlasting salvation may
 be obtained. It is still more encouraging, that this
 help is not only provided for us, but also, in a co-
 operation, is provided to and rested upon
 us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as compensation for
 in our law, as a reward for our faith, and in
 ing to the glorious, everlasting life as in the un-
 broken man, he is laying to every individual, with
 even as made whole.

These words refer to us as a nation which Christ
 propitiously to an impenitent man, as the pool of
 Bethesda. This pool was not intended, was not
 intended, and wanted near the new market. It
 had no power, which was properly, but out to
 us the efficacy of acids and accommodation
 which was afforded to persons coming from every
 quarter to the pool, as a source of relief. In the
 persons,

JOHN, v. 6.

Jesus — saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

THAT we have destroyed ourselves, and are wholly incapable to reverse our situation, are truths not more undoubted than alarming. It is, however, comfortable to reflect, that our situation, though most distressful and dangerous, is by no means desperate. Though we cannot help ourselves, in the Lord is our help. With and from him the most suitable and sufficient relief is to be found. A glorious, an everlasting salvation, may be obtained. It is still more encouraging, that this help is not only provided for us, but also, in a gospel-dispensation, is proposed to and pressed upon us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as compassionating us in our low estate; as wanting employment, and waiting to be gracious, is addressing us as he did the impotent man; he is saying to every individual, *Wilt thou be made whole?*

These words present to us a question which Christ proposed to an impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. This pool, we are informed, was in Jerusalem, and situated near the sheep-market. It had five porches, which may probably point out to us the sufficiency of access and accommodation which was afforded to persons coming from every quarter to the pool, as desirous of relief. In these porches,

porches, we are told, there lay a great multitude of impotent folk, waiting for the moving of the water. What occasioned this attendance, was the healing virtue which at times was derived from this pool: "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." It is disputed, whether the virtue of these waters, and the cures performed by them, were miraculous or natural. In our apprehension, the matter admits of no debate. When it is adverted to, that these waters only occasionally possessed an healing virtue, that they were efficacious in curing any disease whatever, that their virtue was limited but to one person, at a certain season, and that this virtue was communicated by an heavenly agent; these are circumstances which doubtless prove the whole to be miraculous. When the pool first possessed this virtue, is uncertain. It seems probable, that it had its appointment not long before Christ's appearance in our world; was intended as an emblematical accomplishment of Zechariah's prophecy, and an earnest of a speedy accomplishment in its full import; that, confirmed by this symbolical representation, the Jews might with confidence expect, and under all their distresses look forward to, that spiritual healing which was to flow from the Sun of Righteousness, when, in the fulness of time, he should arise. At this pool, among others, there was a certain man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. Whether he had lain all that time, or the greater part, is not ascertained. That he had been a considerable space in waiting, and perhaps more so than any other, is expressly intimated. Our Saviour, who was always going about doing good, in the course of his journeying, came to this pool; and though there

there were a variety of persons who stood in need of assistance, yet, as sovereign in his kindness, it would appear he for the present had business only with the impotent man. Having a gracious design to accomplish in his behalf, he instantly entered into converse with him, and proposed to accomplish a cure for him; to the immediate experience of which, in the most condescending manner, he invited him. The more inveterate the case, the more proper for, and the more welcome is it to his Almighty arm and compassionate heart.

Though this pool in its effects was miraculous, yet, like other miracles under that dispensation, it had a symbolical use, and was subservient, by the medium of earthly things, to raise the mind, and lead it forwards to the consideration of spiritual blessings. We only make a suitable improvement of this object, in its connection, when it is thus appropriated. Hence the pool of Bethesda may point out Christ himself, who is to sinners, self destroyers, what the pool in its name signified: For he is that house of mercy from whence relief can only arise to miserable guilty sinners. The waters in the pool may truly represent the ordinances of Christ in the church. The healing virtue of the waters may hold forth to us the spiritual good of ordinances, the healing of our souls. The motion of the angel, in troubling the waters at the certain season, should lead us to take notice of the effectual operation of the Spirit of Christ, in and by these ordinances, at the set time, and which is indispensably necessary to give them an healing virtue. The multitude of impotent folk lying in the porches will present us with the situation of persons attending upon gospel-ordinances, where circumstances are also emblematically described by what is stated in relation to them. Having these things

things in our view, the method we propose, in discoursing from this subject, is,

I. To offer several remarks from the text and context.

II. To consider the import of the question here proposed.

III. To conclude with some improvement.

I. It is proposed to offer some remarks from the text and context. And here we have in view to remark,

1. That when spiritual diseases prevail, and persons are duly sensible of their situation, this will occasion some suitable concern. An insensibility in relation to diseases, when they prevail, whether of a bodily or spiritual nature, is a most dismal, as well as a most dangerous circumstance. In such a case, the disease rapidly gathers strength, and, before it is attended to, exposes to the most imminent danger, if matters do not become altogether irretrievable. It is no less affecting and alarming, where diseases prevail, and persons are sensible in so far of their situation, and yet are unconcerned and indifferent; for in such circumstances, there is a disregarding danger, a despising interest, and a rushing headlong upon destruction. But however improper both these are, yet, alas! how often are they verified! What multitudes are there, who, although wholly overspread with the loathsome leprosy of sin, yet are remaining in the profoundest security, even when this disease is unceasingly preying upon their vitals, and will at length, unless timely checked, utterly destroy them! Nay, how many are there, who, although awakened and alarmed, so as in some sort to be made sensible that they are labouring under this disease, yet, after all, are

are so blinded to their best interests, and are every way so infatuated, that they rush headlong upon destruction. They either have no concern at all, or the concern which they express is of such a nature, as in no respect deserves to be accounted of. But though all this be, the remark we have laid down is notwithstanding well founded. Persons cannot be duly sensible, and cannot be thoroughly awakened, so as fully to apprehend the nature of that disease under which they labour, but in so far as their being so occasions some suitable concern in relation to their situation. Thus Peter's audience: When they heard all that Peter had to declare to them, they were pricked in their hearts, and said to him, and to the rest of the apostles, "What shall we do?" In the same manner was it with the impotent man, and indeed with all those in the porches. They, as diseased, and as sensible of their situation, were exhibiting some suitable concern; and thus will it be in every instance. — We remark,

2. That a suitable concern as to those diseases which prevail, lies in our seeking after deliverance from them. This is strikingly inculcated in the history before us. The impotent man, with his associates, as being sensible of their situation, as having a suitable concern in relation to it, were seeking after deliverance from it. Thus also Peter's audience and the jailor. He came in trembling before the apostles, and said, "What shall I do to be saved?" and thus will a suitable concern always discover itself where-ever in truth it is. It is by no means enough, that, when awakened, we are thoughtful about, and in so far distressed on account of those spiritual diseases which prevail; nor is it even sufficient that we perceive the necessity of deliverance from them in order to our safety. A suitable approved concern in relation to these, must

must be expressed in earnest desires, in an actual search after deliverance from them. This is required of us, and is indispensably necessary to our welfare. And it is to be observed, that while indifference is highly criminal, so that concern which expresses itself in despair, in despondence, is most unwarrantable and improper. In its nature, it dishonours God, ruins the soul, and is a listening to his suggestions who is the father of lies, and our avowed adversary, and should therefore be guarded against. However complicated and inveterate our diseases are, still deliverance should be sought after, and expected, while the accepted time, and the day of merciful visitation, is continued with us. Our concern can never be proper, but when it has this tendency; and we are ever to remember, that to accomplish, regulate, and maintain all this, is not competent to us, but is the doing of the Lord, the Spirit, and as such wondrous in our eyes. — We remark,

3. That when in earnest as to deliverance from spiritual diseases, persons, with this view, will betake themselves to divine mercy. What the impotent man, with his associates, did in order to their relief, those over-run with spiritual diseases will do, when desirous of deliverance from them. Those had recourse to Bethesda, the house of mercy, where health and cure was to be obtained; and, in like manner, these will betake themselves to divine mercy; for it is only from the riches, the exceeding riches, of that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ, that relief can arise to them. We do not say that this is the first resource to persons when awakened and alarmed. The natural pride, that legal bias of heart, which are in us, dictate a very different course, and would lead us to seek after life as it were by the works of the law; and so attached are we to this method of

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relief,

relief, that it is no easy matter to divert from it. But as nothing other than disappointment and aggravated distress can result from hence, so, when persons are brought to their right minds, to a due discernment of their situation, they will perceive, that divine mercy is what alone affords any solid prospect of relief; and therefore, in seeking after it, will be influenced to lift up their eyes towards this hill, from whence cometh their aid. Thus the Psalmist, in a variety of instances: "Have mercy upon me; for I am weak." "Of thy mercy slay my foes." "O remember not against us former iniquities; let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low." In like manner the publican: "He stood afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." And it is to be observed, that where there is a suitable improvement of divine mercy, persons will cast themselves wholly upon it; will resolve, that if they perish, it shall be at the footstool of mercy. But this can never be; for none perish whose hope and confidence are thus fixed. — We remark,

4. That in seeking after relief from spiritual diseases, persons are to be diligent in the use and improvement of all means, which, as appointed, may be subservient to this end. Though persons that are diseased do betake themselves to divine mercy, and in doing so act a proper part; yet this is not the whole of what is incumbent upon them. Though the egress of divine mercy does not depend upon any thing on our part; though the Lord acts sovereignly, making his mercy to abound, when, how, and where he sees meet; yet having himself appointed certain means, instituted a certain order for conferring the blessing, he so regards and honours his own appointment and institution,

stitution, that he ordinarily displays his mercy in this way, and seldom, though we do not say never, otherwise. If, therefore, persons would wish to obtain relief from spiritual diseases, are desirous that mercy should abound towards them, they must be diligent in the use and improvement of all means which, as appointed, are subservient to this end. There must be a waiting upon the Lord in all the ordinances of his appointment, a due respect to all his commandments, a suitable improvement of his gracious promises; much wrestling at the throne of grace for the blessing; an aiming at stepping into the pool of mercy, when the Angel of the Covenant troubles the waters of the sanctuary; a striving to lay hold on this hope that is set before us; and a patient continuance in such exercise; for it is only in this way we are warranted to expect the blessing. Thus did the impotent man; and he is set forth as a pattern after which we are to copy. He not only came to Bethesda, the house of mercy, but he also entered into one, and very probably all the porches, as he had opportunity. He remained there; and not only so, but also, as often as the waters of the pool were troubled, aimed at stepping into it, that he might obtain a cure. He thus, in every instance, honoured the divine institution at Bethesda, and would not have acted a proper part had he been remiss or deficient in any of these: and thus, in like manner, should it be with all in similar circumstances; for though it is not on account of our diligence and attention to these means that we shall obtain the blessing, yet it is in this way we are warranted to expect it, and hence it is our interest and duty thus to wait upon God. We have besides special encouragement afforded to our doing so. The assurance is, He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember him in all his ways. The

seed of Jacob shall not seek his face in vain. — We remark,

5. That means, however subservient, are never rightly improved, but when they lead out to Christ, who alone, by his Spirit, can render them effectual. There are two extremes which we ought in a particular manner to guard against, and the rather as we are extremely liable to both. The one is, a trusting in means altogether, as if they had an intrinsic efficacy to accomplish a cure for us; the other, a disregarding, a despising means, under the specious pretext of casting ourselves wholly over upon sovereign mercy. Both of these are highly improper; for in the one case it is to be observed, that, instead of glorifying, it dishonours God, to trust him for a cure, in the way of disregarding those means which, by his appointment, are subservient to this end. When doing so, there is a setting limits to him who in midst of Israel is the only Holy One; which is most presumptuous. There is also a pouring contempt upon his express institution and appointment, as if it deserved no regard whatever from us; which is no less improper; and, in a word, it betrays a stupid indifference as to our obtaining the blessing: for if truly in earnest, this would influence to render a proper attention to every thing that is subservient to this end; and hence would lead out to a diligent observance of those means which are of divine appointment; the more so as this is peremptorily required of us. And it is to be adverted to, that there is no inconsistency, but the highest harmony, betwixt a trusting the Lord wholly with a cure, and at the same time being diligent in the use of means as subservient to this end; where-ever the one in an acceptable manner is, the other in consequence will be. The diligent observance of those means which are of divine appointment does not supersede, but is rather

rather subservient to the Lord's working for us in accomplishing our deliverance. But as we are to guard against this extreme, the other, as equally dangerous and criminal, is also carefully to be avoided. Means, however useful in their place, are of themselves altogether inefficacious. It is only as rendered effectual by the great Worker, that they can be subservient to any good purpose. It was the angel's troubling the water that impregnated the pool with an healing virtue. In like manner, it is only the Holy Spirit's shining on the word, and in the heart, his blessing ordinances, that gives them efficacy to quicken and comfort. Therefore to trust in means altogether would be most unprofitable and unwarrantable; for this would be giving them a sphere, an importance, which does not belong to them. Without question, these are only suitably improved when they lead out to Christ, who by his Spirit alone can render them effectual; and this, both by giving efficacy to the means in their sphere, and also strengthening persons to that improvement of them which stands connected with the enjoyment of the blessing. It is not improbable that it was owing to his falling into one or other of the extremes before mentioned, that the impotent man had to remain so long at Bethesda without a cure, while so many others, in his sight, experienced the benefit. Had he not only looked to the angel for impregnating the pool with an healing virtue, but also for that strength which was necessary to an improvement of the gracious opportunity when enjoyed, it is more than probable his cure would have been quickly completed. And that this was not his privilege, is, we apprehend, in part to be accounted for, either from his improper views of the means, or his not taking that course which was necessary to his enjoying benefit.

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from them: for the Lord is jealous of his honour; he will stain the pride of all glory; that he himself alone may be exalted. — We remark,

6. That persons may attend upon means and ordinances for a long time, without any experience of saving effect from them. This is a mournful and a most undoubted truth. It is clearly supported from the case of the impotent man before us. It is observable, he had been thirty-eight years labouring under his infirmity; and, it would seem, had been a considerable period of that time waiting at the pool for a cure; and yet, after all, was in no respect bettered. He was as much diseased, and it is probable more so, than he was when he first came thither. His case is far from being singular. How many are there who have enjoyed the means of grace, have been waiting at the pool of ordinances for a considerable space, even to the extent of thirty, forty, and fifty years, while, after all, they are without any experience of saving benefit from them! Their case is as bad, nay infinitely worse, than when their attendance first commenced. The gospel must always produce one effect or other. It must either prove the favour of life unto life, or of death unto death. If, therefore, it is not effectual to the one, it must be subservient to the other. It interests you to consider, that an attendance upon means and ordinances, though an incumbent duty, an high privilege that ye have opportunity for doing so; yet this is not the whole of what you should be aspiring after. The experience of saving benefit from these is of the last importance, what should be specially in view. And it is carefully to be adverted to, that the one and the other of these is not inseparably connected. In the experience of some, it is a long time before such a connection exists; and in the experience of multitudes, it never does. What
thought-

thoughtfulness should an attention to this occasion! Your lying at the pool, and knowing that the angel at times troubles the waters, so as to give them an healing virtue; what will this avail, unless you are powerfully enabled to step into the pool, to lay hold upon that help, that hope which is set before you, so as to obtain health and cure to your sin-sick souls? Your attendance, instead of being profitable, will turn out to your greater condemnation. How importunate, then, ought your supplications to be for that drawing efficacy, that day of power, which will effectually strengthen you to a suitable improvement of your merciful visitation, while it is continued with you?—We remark,

7. That disappointments, when waiting upon ordinances, though often repeated, should not produce despair. Though persons may attend upon ordinances for a long time without the experience of saving benefit from them; yet this, in itself, is no argument or evidence that they shall always do so. Though disappointments may have been frequent; yet this is no sufficient reason for indulging despair, or giving way to despondence: after all, we may in due time reap, if we faint not. The disappointments and delays hitherto measured out, may be occasioned by improper managements on our part; may be measured out, one after another, with a view that such mismanagements may be fully corrected. There may also be the design by these, to display divine wisdom and sovereignty in conferring the blessing; for though our time be always ready, yet the Lord's time, which is the best and fittest, may not be yet come; and he will stain the pride of all glory, that he himself alone may be exalted. When these important purposes are accomplished, our disappointments will cease; we will find, to our sweet experience, that

that it is no vain thing to seek the Lord, to wait upon ordinances. Tho' the blessing may be delayed, it will never be denied to such as are truly in earnest to obtain it. The impotent man had various discouragements and disappointments measured out; yet these did not operate so far upon him as to produce despair. In like manner, the Church, Song iii. and these are on record, to inculcate upon us the important truth we have now stated. Whatever disappointments and discouragements may be measured out, yet while there are any grounds remaining to influence this exercise, there should still a confidence be entertained as to matters terminating happily in our experience. We may have only to go the little farther, when we shall meet with him whom our soul loveth. The Lord has not limited himself to any particular ordinance or ordinances, in which, to the experience of any individual, he will most certainly be found; nor has he fixed the precise period for his doing so, in such manner as that the mean and season of conferring the blessing can certainly be known to them: We therefore can never be sufficiently in the way of duty, or have reason to despair of meeting with the Lord, till we have waited upon him with perseverance in all ordinances; have gone through the length and breadth of Galilee, and have missed him; but this can never be. — This leads to remark,

8. That a conscientious waiting upon ordinances will, in due time, be crowned with success. The Lord has never said, and he never will say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. Such as honour him with a conscientious, a continued waiting upon him in ordinances, shall in due time reap the fruit of their labours, a reward not of debt, but of grace. When the Lord has a saving work to accomplish, he influences the per-

son to persevere in waiting upon him, till he has found him.

son to seek him; he keeps him thus employed till the season he has fixed for his conferring the blessing arrives; and the longer the person has sought him, the more frequent, and the more trying his disappointments were, the more sweet, substantial, and satisfying will the blessing be, when it is enjoyed; and there is the most undoubted certainty, that it shall at length be vouchsafed, when duly inquired after. That exercise which the Holy Spirit produces, shall not be in vain; the desire of the righteous shall be granted; a suitable improvement of these means which the Lord has appointed will, without fail, in its season bring about that end for which they are subservient. Thus, with the impotent man, a conscientious waiting at the pool had, in his experience, a most comfortable issue; and, in like manner with the Church, however distressed with disappointments, she had to remark, I went but the little farther, when I found him whom my soul loveth: and thus will it be in every instance. At the same time, it is carefully to be adverted to, that none who attain to this have any ground of boasting in themselves. Had their waiting depended upon their will or their ability, it would have quickly ceased; they would soon have wearied in well-doing: their patient waiting upon the Lord in ordinances, their continued inquiries after the blessing, is his doing; and as such, when the issue of it is enjoyed, will be wondrous in their eyes.

9. We remark, that every visitation has its time, and every cure its appointed season. This is what should ever be in view as highly subservient to regulate our conduct. When visitations are measured out, we are too ready to err by our impetuous desires to have them instantly terminated. We do not consider, that he who sent them, and had a right to send them, has fixed the period of their continuance,

continuance, and the purposes for which they are to be subservient; and therefore it must be unbecoming, as well as unavailing, to desire their removal till that period has arrived, and the purposes in view have been accomplished. Though the divine operations cannot so properly be measured by a definite space of time, as ours are and may be, yet they are all beautifully and wisely arranged in order; for he is the God of order, and every part of his procedure must fall out in that order and connection he has marked out for it, and not otherwise. Hence, as the measuring out every visitation is his doing, as its continuance is specially fixed by him; so the removal, a cure being effected, has a peculiar season allotted to it in that connection of procedure which he has determined upon. In proof of this, we may with propriety recur to the case before us. The disorder under which this important man laboured, had doubtless a particular time fixed both for its commencement and continuance, and his cure an appointed season; for no other reason can be assigned, why he remained so long infirm, why he was not sooner made whole. It was easy for Jesus to have attended to this work at an earlier period, had it been proper he should have done so. He is not slack, as men count slackness; but always accomplishes purposes in their season; and therefore his not sooner interposing in a case which, to appearance, required a speedy exertion, certainly serves to establish this remark, that every visitation has its time, and every cure its season. Divine wisdom, sovereignty, and grace, are conspicuous in all this. If therefore we would give to the Lord that glory which is his due; if we would suitably consult our own interest, while imploring the egress of new covenant mercy, we must aim at adorning the riches of divine wisdom and sovereignty, as what must

must be illustrated in conferring the blessings; for though our time may be always ready, yet the Lord's time, which is doubtless the best, the most proper, may not be yet come. We remark,

10. That persons, in coming to Christ, may meet with much opposition, many hindrances, and this both in their first improvements of him and afterwards. There are two extremes we ought carefully to guard against; the one is, a thinking religion, a coming to Christ, an easy matter, so easy that it may be attended to at any time; the other, a considering it as truly difficult, so difficult, that it need never be attempted. Both these should be avoided; and in opposition to them, we should have impressed on our minds, that a coming to Christ, an improvement of him, while it is a matter of that importance as to claim a preference to every thing else, being the one thing needful, is far from being an easy matter. There must be a striving, a struggling hard to enter in at the strait gate. In coming to Christ, much opposition may be expected, many hindrances will be thrown in the way; and these will become the more formidable, be vastly increased, the longer it is delayed. Sin, Satan, the world, and all our enemies, exert themselves to counteract every advance to this. At the same time, though difficulties may attend the pursuit, yet these are not unsurmountable; they are not such as should discourage from making the attempt: in due time we shall reap if we faint not. Our comfort is, that in this business more and mightier by far are those that are with us, than they that are or can be against us. In the history before us, the impotent man, according to the representation given by himself, met with various difficulties, repeated hindrances in his attempt to get into the pool, which was a figurative coming to Christ. In the case of the child possessed with a devil,

devil, after other difficulties were got over, even when he was yet a-coming to Christ, the devil threw him down, and tare him. What befel them, or others, in like circumstances, is emblematical of what all who come to Jesus have to experience. Some have more, and some have fewer difficulties to struggle against; but none are wholly exempted. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force: and as a coming to Christ, an improvement of him, thus commences; so with the Christian there is a continued warfare. What will ye see in the Shunamite? as it were the company of two armies. We remark,

11. That the most malignant, inveterate disorders, cases that seem desperate, may and ought to be put into Christ's hands; and the nearer they approach to this description, the more welcome they are to him. In the instance before us, the disorder under which the impotent man laboured was most inveterate; he had been a very long time afflicted with it; no shorter a space than thirty-eight years; during which period the disorder had full opportunity for acquiring the utmost strength, taking the firmest hold of the man: And it was not only inveterate, but seemed desperate; nay, it was so in respect of what the man himself could do, or what others would do for him. After, perhaps, repeated fruitless attempts to obtain a cure elsewhere, as a last resource, he had come to the pool; and even though he had, matters did not promise to be much better with him: incapable to exert himself, and unpitied by others, he, while observing the golden opportunity repeatedly snatched from him by others, notwithstanding his efforts to seize it, had to remain without a cure, matters growing worse instead of better with him. But the time of his extremity was the time of Christ's gracious opportunity. His inveterate, malignant

lignant disorder, instead of being rejected by Jesus, seemed rather of all others to attract his attention. Though there were various other diseased persons lying at the pool, yet, from what is stated, it would appear Christ only addressed him, and this most probably because he was the person who was in greatest need of a cure, whose case, as a desperate deadly one, was most suited to be taken up by him, who works so as none, nothing can let him. What Jesus did on this occasion, is a standing encouragement to all in similar or even worse circumstances than the impotent man. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Therefore, as formerly, so still, the most inveterate diseases may be put into his hands, and the more desperate they seem, the more suited they are for his management. He heals all manner of diseases; and he is no less willing than able to interfere. Without the exception of a single person or case, the gracious invitation is, Bring him, bring it to me. What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. That disorder which is put under his management, he will give a good account of; he will bring health to the person; he will make him whole. This he has expressly promised; and he will, without peradventure, do as he has said. "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them," Jer. xxxiii. 6. The promise, you will observe, as indefinite, is open to every case, and looks with the most benign aspect to every person whose circumstances are such as require a cure. — We only remark,

In the *last* place, That when Jesus deals savingly with persons, he deals most particularly with them. This is obvious from his procedure in the present instance. There were various other persons lying at the pool beside the impotent man, who

stood in need of his interposition. His being present with them, and passing amongst them, considering the character he had, the office with which he was invested, all this afforded them an opportunity, and laid an obligation upon them to a suitable improvement of him; and in that they did not, they were verily guilty. At the same time it is observable, that Jesus, having for the present a gracious design upon none but the impotent man, others, as it were, only enjoyed that external call and invitation which his presence and administration amongst them afforded. It was, however, very different with the impotent man. He not only had the same privilege in common with the rest, but also, as a chosen vessel, was particularly distinguished from them, by Jesus dealing closely with him, and thus addressing him, *Wilt thou be made whole?* He was in this manner awakened to a sense of his situation, the need he had of a cure, and was made acquainted with a suitable remedy which was provided: having this remedy presented to him, he was admonished to an improvement of it; and this in so particular and urgent terms, that he was reduced to the alternative of joyfully receiving or wilfully rejecting it; hence divine power, as accompanying the gracious exhibition, produced the former, influenced him to give Jesus that employment which he was requiring, and which would issue in his being made whole: and thus always will it be. When the Lord takes a saving dealing with any person, that word by which he works, though at the same time it may be addressed to the person in common with multitudes around him, yet by the peculiar energy of the divine Spirit shining into his heart, and shining upon the word, it becomes so pointed and particular, that he perceives, and cannot but perceive it to be specially

specially addressed to him. It has a commanding, an alluring influence. By sending the rod of his strength out of Zion, his people become willing in the day of power. Inquire then, my brethren, and see if the Lord the Redeemer, by his Spirit, has so dealt with you: for be assured, if you have had no peculiar or distinguishing experience, however long you have lain at the pool of ordinances, you still are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

We might have farther remarked, that Christ, in order to his conferring blessings, is specially desirous that persons should themselves explain to him their situation; and unfold that confidence in him which they are entertaining. Though sovereign in his procedure, yet for these blessings he has to bestow, he will be inquired of by the house of Israel, that he may do it for them. Thus the impotent man, previous to his being made whole, had to explain his situation, to declare that confidence he had in his interposition; and the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. We might have also stated, that in some cases a direct and immediate improvement of Christ by faith, is the alone way to obtain relief. Thus, while Christ addressed the impotent man, Wilt thou be made whole? when doing so, he may be considered as pointing out, that if in earnest to enjoy the blessing, he was not to look for it from the pool. This, now that its antitype was come, had lost much, if not the whole of its virtue; at any rate, it was insufficient to cure one in his situation; and therefore, if he ardently wished to obtain a cure, there must be a passing from hence, a direct and immediate laying hold upon the glorious physician now before him, and who alone was equal to the work. But on these and other remarks we shall not enlarge.—It was proposed,

H. To consider the import of the question addressed to the impotent man, with its application to us; and we apprehend, among other things, it implied,

I. That he was diseased, and in so far sensible of his situation. This is obvious. Unless there was a proceeding upon this ground, there would have been no propriety in thus addressing him. The whole need not a physician, but only the sick; and therefore it is only such as may be inquired at, if they will be indebted to his assistance. We may add, that, to render a proper entertainment to the inquiry, it is not sufficient that the persons to whom it is proposed are sick, but also that they be in so far sensible of their situation; for otherwise, tho' in absolute need of assistance, they will be as indifferent to the physician's offer, as if nothing ailed them. We would not be understood as insinuating, that assistance should never be proffered but to those who, as sensible of their need, are disposed to make it welcome. In common life, humanity will dictate, that those are most intitled to sympathy and assistance, who may be labouring under disorders, and yet are insensible of their situation. It often happens, that disorders are not distinctly perceived till the physician has commenced his operations towards a cure. In like manner, the glorious Redeemer, moved with compassion for perishing souls, in a gospel-dispensation offers his assistance; and he does so to all in common, as diseased, whether sensible of their situation or not. At the same time, it is only those who are sensible of their need, that can render him a proper entertainment; and that they may become sensible of their need, he both calls them under their proper character, and commences his operations in them towards a cure. While, therefore, the Lord, in a gospel-dispensation, is addressing us as he did the impotent

impotent man, this should awaken and alarm us. We may be assured, that unless we were diseased, and this to a great degree, the glorious physician would never thus make offer of his assistance; and the more insensible we are as to our situation, the more dangerous is it. In such a case, there is every reason to apprehend that the disease has acquired great strength, and, if not speedily checked, will prove mortal; and that it may be checked, there should be a present embracing and improving the gracious offer made us.

2. That he was unable to make himself whole. This also is evident. If he had ability himself, there was no propriety in the offer made him; nay, if he had been capable of doing any thing, however inconsiderable, towards his relief, the inquiry would have been expressed in different terms, probably somewhat to this purpose: "Wouldst thou be assisted in thy endeavours to be whole?" But there is no such thing stated. The work is pointed out as what must be entirely the doing of another; and thence, without question, there is intimated his inability to do the whole, or even contribute any endeavours towards his relief. This was the fact. He had been infirm for thirty-eight years; and this to such a degree, as that he was utterly incapable to do any thing effectual for his relief. We do not say that he was incapable of any thing whatever; for he aimed at doing. He stepped forward to the pool; and when doing so, acted a proper part. Yet, after all, he could do nothing that was effectual for his relief. His utmost exertions were unavailing to his getting into the pool. After repeated attempts, he was in as bad, if not in a worse situation than ever. The case of the impotent man points out the condition of all in their natural estate. They, as well as he, are wholly unable to help themselves. This is plainly signified

by the gracious exhibitions which are made us. Jehovah, in the riches of his grace and wisdom, would never propose to make us whole, unless we were utterly unable for the business ourselves.

3. That he was unwilling to be made whole. This must be admitted. If he had exhibited a disposition to be made whole, there was certainly no propriety in addressing such an inquiry to him. What only remained for Jesus to do, was to effect a cure for him, if he saw meet. Jesus having thus to question him, certainly points out, that he was in so far unwilling to render him the employment. And doubtless this was the fact. Though in some measure he discovered a disposition to be whole, by his lying at the pool in one of the porches, and aiming to step into it; yet in his obtaining the blessing, it appears he wished to be as active himself, to be as little indebted to others, as possible; otherwise, when he repeatedly felt his own inability, he would have made application to others for their assistance; which, from any thing we know, he never did. Nay, so indisposed was he to assistance from another, that when Christ made a proposition of this tenor, he did not readily embrace it, or signify that this was just what he was desirous of. He only made his complaint; and when complaining, he does not represent his having made application to others for their assistance, and being refused, but, in general, proposes his inability, and consequent disappointment. The expression, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool," seems rather to point out a want than a complaint, and a want from which he does not seem to have been over anxious to be relieved; otherwise it is not probable he would have remained so long in his then situation: at any rate, he would have been more forward in embracing the gracious offer now afforded him. And his temper

per and situation was far from being singular. We have here presented to our view an emblematical picture of human nature in its corrupt estate. With too many, the excellence, the dignity of human nature, is a subject much insisted upon. They cannot sufficiently extoll its noble powers, its pre-eminent qualities. Being deeply enamoured with self, they profusely lavish praise upon this idol. But it is entirely owing to their ignorance of, their unacquaintance with, the real state of human nature, that any presume to exalt it. Their doing so is by no means an argument or evidence of their penetration, but quite the reverse. In the case of the impotent man, we have, in miniature, represented the state, the condition of all mankind. What he was in a natural, we are in a spiritual sense. He was disordered in a great degree as to his body; thus are we as to our souls. Our situation is much more alarming than his was. It would appear he had some sensibility as to his condition; while we, naturally, are without any, though in much worse circumstances. He was unable to help himself; so are we. We are weak, nay without strength. Sin has so enfeebled; so enervated the powers of the soul and the members of the body, that we can do nothing spiritually good. Farther, he was not only unable to help himself, but also unwilling to be indebted to another for assistance. He was both poor and proud, impotent and insolent; qualities which, when blended together, make but an unseemly compound, and render the possessor every way contemptible. Thus, however, are we. Tho' we are nothing, and can do nothing, yet so proud and perverse are we, that we will not be in debt to another, for his doing that for us which we are incapable of doing for ourselves. We will not submit to the righteousness of Jesus; we will not be indebted to the exceeding riches of grace, reigning towards

towards us through righteousness; we would still tug on at the oar of duty; whatever disappointments and distress may arise to us thence, under the delusive expectation that our wishes shall at length be gratified; and nothing but the exceeding greatness of divine power, as exerted towards us, overcoming the natural pride, that legal bias of heart, which is in us, nothing but this will make us desist from such fruitless and foolish conduct. From these circumstances it must appear, that human nature, instead of being distinguished for its dignity and excellence, has rather to be deplored, and mourned over, as lying in ruins. "Though God made man at first upright, he soon found out many inventions."

S E R.

S E R M O N V.

JOHN, v. 6.

Jesus saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

IN the preceding discourse, we discussed all that we had to offer upon the *first*, and proceeded so far in prosecution of the *second* head in our method, which was, to consider the import of the question proposed to the impotent man, *Wilt thou be made whole?* We have already observed, that it implied that he was diseased, and in so far sensible of his situation, that he was unable to make himself whole, and that he was unwilling to be made whole. We now add,

4) That relief from his disorder was possible, practicable, and what might actually be enjoyed by him. Had not this been the case, there would have been the highest impropriety in proposing such a question to him. The one must certainly be considered as proceeding upon the footing of the other; and it is beyond a doubt, that however deplorable his situation was, however inveterate and desperate his disease had become, and however unable to help himself; yet, after all, to bring him health and cure, was both possible and practicable, what might actually be enjoyed by him; for nothing is too hard for Jehovah, who works so as none can let him. Accordingly to the experience of this blessing he is expressly invited. And as with the impotent

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tent man, so with all to whom Jesus in a gospel-dispensation is addressing himself, it holds, that however complicate and inveterate their disorders are, however numerous and varied their complaints may be, and though they themselves are without strength; yet as to all of them relief is not only possible and practicable, but what may actually be enjoyed; and if they obtain not a cure, the blame will be with themselves. Relief unexceptionably suitable and sufficient is provided. To the enjoyment of this blessing Jehovah is inviting all, without exception of any: Ho! every one that thirsteth, says he, come ye to the waters: whosoever will, let him come. And while thus addressing us, he gives the most peremptory assurance, that however woful and wretched our situation be, yet in him is our help. He hath delivered, he does deliver, and he will deliver. Him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.

5. That Christ was both able and willing to make him whole. This is evident; for while no other was proposed to move in the business, the conclusion is natural, that Jesus was to be considered as the undertaker himself; that it was for himself he was asking the employment; and that, when making such a demand, he was proposing nothing other than what he had both an ability and a disposition to make good. If this is not admitted, the inquiry must be considered as an insult to, and aggravation of, the impotent man's distress, rather than a kindness. This, Jesus was absolutely incapable of. And, my brethren, while this is implied in our text, it is a truth the most undoubted, that Christ is both able and willing, in every instance, to make those whole who give him employment, and to whom he addresses himself in a gospel-dispensation. His ability is most unquestionable. He is the mighty one, mighty to save, the Almighty Jehovah.

hovah. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and prudence. Nothing can be too hard for him. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them; and he is no less willing than able. Of this he has given the most satisfying evidence. From the ages of eternity he cheerfully engaged himself, as the undertaking Surety of a better testament; and in the prospect of fulfilling this undertaking, he was always rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and his delights were with the sons of men. In the fulness of time, as mindful of his undertaking, and having pleasure in fulfilling it, he left the bosom of the father, came into our world, took upon him our nature, became acquainted with our infirmities, was made sin, and made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, and that they might receive the adoption of sons. His heart was so much set upon the work of saving sinners, that he was most forward in going through with those extreme sufferings which he had to endure. I have a baptism, said he, to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! He poured out his soul an offering for sin, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Having completely finished the work that was given him to do, before his ascension and exaltation, he gave the most striking demonstration, that he, as an Almighty Redeemer, delighteth in mercy, and waits that he may be gracious; for he gave in special charge to his apostles, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*. And their successors in every period are authorised to proclaim the same glad tidings; for Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Nay, it is their special business, as ambassadors in his name, to beseech sinners

ners to be reconciled to God. Such affection has the Redeemer to his work, that, instead of having to be importuned to take employment, he, as compassionate sinners in their low estate, stretches out his hands towards them in a gospel-dispensation, is importunately urgent with them, and employs every winning method to obtain that entertainment for himself which is indispensably necessary to their eternal welfare. They have only to come to him, and they, without peradventure, shall have life. Him that cometh to him, he will in no wise cast out. In these circumstances, unbelief might doubtless blush, if it was capable of blushing, for daring once to call in question, either Christ's ability or willingness, in any instance, to make whole.

6. That Christ admits of no rivals or assistants in making whole. Having himself an unquestionable ability for the work, and being every way disposed to engage in it, there is neither reason for, or propriety in, the interference of any other. And, what is more, this is what he will by no means allow of; and even did he allow of it, there are none who, if properly attentive to matters, could propose it. The work of salvation is so arduous and so difficult, so much superior to the capacities of any creature, even the most exalted, that it must be the height of presumption once to attempt moving in such a business. But however presumptuous, alas! how common the attempt! at the same time it is what Jesus by no means admits of, what is at once highly dishonouring and displeasing to him. In the case of the impotent man, there is not the smallest reference to any but Christ himself, as proper to engage in accomplishing the blessing. There was nothing required of the impotent man himself, but his simple acquiescence in Christ's undertaking the business; and this was even what Jesus would, by his

his Spirit, produce in him. There is no mention of any other; and therefore there is thence intimated, that Christ was to be the alone worker in making whole. Instruments he might make use of, means he might employ; but these were not either rivals with, or assistants in the work, but entirely under his direction, and could do nothing but as he wrought by and with them. And thus is it in every instance. He will have all the employment, and all the glory, or he will not engage in working for us. He will not give his glory to another, or his praise to graven images. To propose dividing the work with him, is either to distrust his ability, or to call in question his willingness; and this is an insult he will by no means suffer, a daring encroachment on his prerogative. He is the just God, and the Saviour; beside him there is no other.

7. That if Christ cured him of the present, he would cure him of all other disorders whatever. When Christ cures any, he cures them completely; he makes perfectly whole. He does not do his work by halves; nor does he divide his blessings: whenever he commences his operations on any, he never ceases till he perfects what concerns them. He is not like other workers, who often begin that which they are unable to finish, or who, though they may be capable for one piece of business, are in every respect unequal to another, no less important and necessary. Nothing is too hard for him: He is a rock, and his work is perfect. And as he does not do his work by halves, so neither does he divide his blessings; when he offers you one, he in effect makes you welcome to every blessing; for they are in their nature inseparable; the enjoyment of one, interests in, and secures the enjoyment of every blessing in due time. This is so undoubted, that the Lord, when proposing to con-

fer one blessing, speaks of it as a conferring every blessing. Thus, in the present case, Jesus, by inquiring at the impotent man if he would be made whole, gave him assurance, that, in the event of his meeting with employment from him to this end, he would do this for him in all the extent of the expression, though for the present he might experience little more than relief from that disorder of infirmity under which he had so long laboured. This, however, was the commencement of his work; and he would continue employed in his behalf, till he had made him whole. This was one blessing which he would vouchsafe; but it was only a part, and in its nature an earnest, of all that goodness which was prepared for the poor, and which accordingly in due time would be fully enjoyed by him. And as with the impotent man, so in every instance; for the Lord "will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

8. That Christ, in making whole, commences his operations with the cure of the will. This is evidently pointed at in the question which is here proposed: for while his aversion and unwillingness to a being made whole is clearly intimated, there is doubtless also signified, that this aversion must be removed, as a first and necessary step to what was proposed. His will must be cured of that perverseness and rebellion which belonged to it, as a part, and a leading part, of his being made whole. You will accordingly observe, that the emphasis of the inquiry lies specially on *Wilt thou?* and hence we are instructed, that to have the will brought under subjection to Christ was a first object of attention with him, and should be such with the impotent man, and with us. And, my brethren, while this is taught us in our text, it is a truth which de-
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serves particular attention from us. We are by nature averse and unwilling to give Christ employment; his great complaint against the hearers of the gospel is, that they will not come to him, that they may have life. Jesus never reigns in, rules over, or works for any, but such as are his willing subjects; and they are made such by himself, by the effectual operation of his Spirit and grace in them: it is the first work he does in their behalf: "Thy people shall be willing in thy day of power." No sooner does the one commence, than the other is produced. However perverse and rebellious they formerly were, yet when divine power is exerted, it will have the happy effect of making willing, captivating their hearts to the obedience of faith; but unless divine power were exerted, this could never be; for as none can come unto the Father but by Christ, so none can come unto Christ but such as the Father, who sent him, draws. We are not, however, to imagine, when the will is cured, that there is any constraint employed, or violence offered to it; that it is restrained of its free exercise, as if the drawing by the Father, the making willing, and captivating the heart, expressions which are used in describing this blessing, implied thus much. No, my brethren, the will is as freely exercised in coming to Christ, as in any other of its acts whatever: and Christ would not be duly honoured, were not this the fact. When, therefore, a person is said to be made willing to be drawn to Christ, this is to be considered as denoting, that the will, which is by nature prone to evil, is so changed as to have a bias to good. The operations of the Spirit of Christ, and those displays of the exceeding riches of grace towards him with which he is favoured, have such an overcoming influence, as that the will is sweetly, irresistibly drawn to an exerting itself as it does. But while it

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does so, it acts most freely; and a freedom of acting is in no respect inconsistent with that influence which may operate in producing the action; for the will, in its exercise, must always be determined by something, unless we were to suppose it a mere machine; which would be most absurd. It concerns you, then, to reflect, that the first blessing you must receive from Christ is the cure of your wills; and therefore, instead of complaining that you have not a will to give Christ employment, and so cannot profit by him, be rather exercised in looking to him for his commencing his operations in your behalf, by his making you willing, working in you both to will and to do, and the work of faith with power. You have the best encouragement afforded for doing so. He waits that he may be gracious: he says, *Wilt thou be made whole?*

9. That all such as render a proper entertainment to Christ must employ him to make them whole. The impotent man could not have made a proper return to Christ, unless his answer was as extensive as the question proposed. Though he had given him employment to cure this and the other disorder under which he laboured, yet if any work was kept in reserve for himself or others to accomplish, in this case a proper return was not made. Christ demanded all employment; and a proper account of his kindness could not be rendered, unless the compliance was as extensive as the demand. The question remained unanswered, if there was not, in the most explicit unreserved terms, an acquiescence in what was proposed. And this, Sirs, is the case in every instance. Persons never render Christ a proper entertainment, unless they give him all employment. It will by no means suffice to improve him as a Saviour from wrath, if we do not also employ him as a Saviour from sin. If we want only to be indebted to him for some things,

things, and propose doing other things ourselves, we by no means are giving him that glory which is his due. As he himself proposes to make whole, his offer must either be altogether embraced or rejected. There is, there can be no medium exercise. Beware then of attempting to rob Christ of his right. Be exercised in giving him that glory which is his due. Consider all your help to be in, with, and from him. Improve him daily, that you may have life, and may have it more abundantly. — We only add,

In the *last* place, That such as would be indebted to Christ for a cure of their spiritual disorders, must not presume to prescribe to him, or limit his procedure in accomplishing the blessing, but must leave him to act as his wisdom and sovereignty may direct. In the present instance you will observe, that when Jesus proposed to the impotent man the making him whole, he did not mention in what way he was to accomplish this, but reserved the direction and ordering of the cure entirely to himself; and certainly the impotent man would have acted very improperly, if, in reply, he had limited Christ to a certain method of procedure; if he had insisted, that Jesus should wait upon him, and assist him when the angel troubled the water, or marked out some other method for his obtaining a cure. It is probable he already had erred too much in limiting divine sovereignty; and it doubtless would have fared better with him, had he been otherwise disposed. At any rate, he was now taught that his cure was to be sought for and expected in the way of leaving infinite wisdom and sovereignty to take whatever methods of accomplishing it were judged best. No mean could be effectual, unless the Lord wrought with and by it; and any mean would be sufficient, if it was vested with his commission to this end. And as with the impotent man,

so in all cases: Though it is our duty to be diligent in the use and improvement of means, and while doing so, confidently to expect the blessing; yet we are never, as to any particular mean, to promise more from it than as God sees meet to vouchsafe us; or are we, when employing Christ, to limit his procedure, but must leave him to work for us when and how he pleases. We are ill judges of what is best for us; and we are equally unequalled to point out how the blessing may be conferred with most advantage. At any rate, if we would enjoy the blessing, it should ever be remembered, that this can only be expected in that way in which the Lord has proposed and promised it to us, and that is, as displaying his sovereignty; for he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And it is to be observed, that it is often owing to our misconduct in this respect, that we are without the blessing. No wonder that we receive not when we are asking amiss.—We now proceed,

III. To make some improvement. And from this subject various important instructions may be derived; such as,

1. That the divine grace and goodness towards the sons of men was and is exceeding great. When we had fallen by our iniquity, and were overwhelmed with various diseases, both of a bodily and spiritual nature, God was under no obligation to interpose in our behalf. He might in justice have suffered those disorders to have prevailed, till we had perished under them, as the just demerit of our departure from and disobedience against him. But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, thought upon us in our low estate. He spake in vision to his Holy One, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty.

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He exalted a chosen one from among the people; one mighty to save, who heals bodies; and who heals souls; for whom nothing can be too hard. He has instituted means, which, when suitably improved, will be fully subservient to that end which is proposed by them. Under the Old-Testament dispensation, besides other means of healing, there was a special catholicon afforded in the water of the pool of Bethesda; and it was owing to the riches of divine grace that this was enjoyed. Under the New-Testament dispensation, in like manner, besides other methods of cure, we have a special catholicon afforded us in the ordinances of divine appointment, which to us are what the water of the pool of Bethesda was to the Jews; the one being clearly emblematical of the other. And in this provision we have also an illustrious display of divine goodness: The word, the ordinances of divine appointment, are as a spiritual dispensary, which contains cordials and restoratives, cathartics and correctives; and, in short, every medicine that is suited to the varied spiritual disorders that may prevail; and when improved in a becoming manner, will be subservient to bring health and cure. "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

2. How highly should we prize, and how carefully should we improve the means of grace, the ordinances of divine appointment. If we are diseased, and this to a great degree; if we stand in absolute need of relief; and if the ordinances, the means of grace, as appointed, are specially subservient to this end, all which is most undoubted; then certainly these should be in high estimation with us; for they are in so far our life and our health, as having special influence in producing and promoting both for us; and the best evidence that we can render of our having these in proper estimation,

estimation, is carefully to improve them. Duty as well as interest inculcate upon us a due attention to divine ordinances. As being the appointment of Heaven, the duty we owe God lays an obligation upon us to respect them; and as being the means of our safety and welfare, interest dictates a diligent conscientious waiting upon them, that the end for which they are subservient may be accomplished. Hence, such as are thoroughly awakened, and possess the spiritual discernment, highly prize, and carefully improve the means of grace. Thus the Psalmist, "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day. I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." Thus also the church, as stated in the Song of Solomon, and elsewhere. When it is otherwise, when persons have no relish for divine ordinances, are careless and negligent in their attendance upon them, this, doubtless, betrays that they are ignorant of, and unconcerned as to their situation, that they have no proper discernment of the riches of mercy, as displayed towards them, in and by these. Whence is it, my brethren, that such multitudes loiter at home, despising the opportunities of grace which are afforded them? Whence is it that so many indulge themselves in habitual carelessness and slumber, when in the outward form they are attending to these? The reason is obvious, and it is a most alarming one; the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them. — We have pointed out to us,

3. One great end we should have in view, when attending upon gospel ordinances. Doubtless this should be, that by their instrumentality we be made whole. None attend upon a gospel-dispensation in a proper manner but such as do so from

a sense of need, and under an impression of the divine authority binding to this. To gratify an idle curiosity, or come in a careless thoughtless manner, which we fear is too common, is far from proper conduct. When waiting upon ordinances, while the glory of God should be ever in our view, as the first object, a due regard, in the next place, is to be had to our spiritual welfare; and when consulting this in a proper manner, we are specially to point at a being made whole. It is not with a view simply to our becoming whole of those diseases under which we are labouring, that we should attend upon ordinances, as if these in themselves, or we working by them, could accomplish the business. If we do so, certainly we can never attain to the end proposed. Besides, this would be to pervert ordinances to a purpose for which they were never intended. These were never designed to be effectual as of themselves, or as means which would be subservient in the hand of creatures; their original institution was expressly with a view to God's working in and by them: and therefore we never rightly apprehend their nature, or suitably improve them, but when we are looking through ordinances to the great Worker himself, who only can make them, as means, effectual to the end proposed; and so are improving them, not simply that we may become whole, but that the Lord, in and by their instrumentality, may make us whole. Thus the impotent man was directed to have in view not merely a becoming whole, but a being made whole, that the means of divine appointment might, in his experience, be rendered effectual to this end; and what was written aforetime, was written for our learning. — We have afforded us,

4. One special reason why persons who are somewhat conscientious, attend so long at the pool of ordinances in expectation of, and yet remain without

a cure. Various reasons might be assigned, accounting for this; but a chief one lies in their not preserving to means and ordinances their proper place. They promise more from them than they are warranted to expect, or which it is their sphere to render. They forget to give to God that glory which is his due; and what they rob God of, they ascribe to the creature. Offending thus, they justly provoke the Lord to withhold that efficacy from ordinances which is of and from him, without which they are unavailing; whereas, were they acting a proper part, preserving to ordinances their proper place, considering them as only instruments in the Lord's hand, and so were exercised in insisting with the angel of the covenant, that he would trouble the water, impregnate word and ordinances with an healing virtue, as what was absolutely necessary to their obtaining a cure; if this were their attainment, it doubtless could not be, that they would have so long to wait upon ordinances without a cure; for the Lord never said, and he never will say it to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. He meets him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember him in his ways. But if persons expect more from ordinances than what means and instruments are capable of; no wonder then that disappointment and aggravated distress should arise to such. The Lord is a jealous God; he will stain the pride of all glory, that he himself alone may be exalted. — We may discern,

5. The great design on account of which Christ comes forth in a gospel-dispensation. It is just the same upon the matter which he had in coming to the pool of Bethesda. In the one case, it was to make the impotent man whole; in the other, it is to bring health and cure to diseased souls. The Son of man said, he is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. This, doubtless,

which was lost by him, to which he came in order to save

was in view when he at first engaged in the eternal undertaking; and to this design he constantly adheres in all his procedure towards the sons of men under a gospel dispensation. All the warnings which are given, all the threatenings which are uttered, all the judgements which are denounced, all the intreaties which are employed, all the calls which are addressed, and all the winning methods which are employed, are just in their nature so many declarations, that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners; and that he waits to be gracious. His great design in and by all these is, that he, as the mighty Saviour, may meet with employment from sinners, self-destroyers, and might make them whole; for he came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. And to carry forwards this design, Jesus is truly in earnest. Of this he has given the most incontestible evidence. He left the bosom of the Father, he came into our world, he took upon him our nature, became acquainted with our infirmities, was made under the law, and all that he might be the Mediator betwixt God and man. Now that he is invested with this office and character, notwithstanding all the opposition and insult he is meeting with, he still is stretching out the hand of mercy towards us, and in the most importunate and endearing manner would prevail with us to give him entertainment; nay, this is so much upon his heart, that if we may so express ourselves, it is with reluctance and regret that he ceases his dispensations of grace towards any; and it is not till their aggravated provocations oblige him to this that he does it. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Oh, that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" See then that ye refuse
not

not him that speaketh to you from heaven. "How will ye escape, if ye neglect so great a salvation!" — We have demonstrated to us,

6. The peculiar eminence and excellence of Christ as the great physician. He makes whole, and he does so, whatever the nature of the disorder is, or however many disorders may be prevailing. In this respect he is altogether unparalleled. Many have the name of physician, and in so far deserve it, as being possessed of the medical art; but the utmost exertions of the best, are feeble, and very limited. Many disorders bid them defiance; and this though they are acquainted with their nature, and a suitable remedy. In other cases, the disease is, perhaps, incomprehensible by them, and hence incurable. Even in the slightest complaints, they are capable of doing no more than using the proper means; and if the blessing is not vouchsafed along with the means, these will be unavailing; and so the physician, of himself, can do nothing effectual. But Christ, the great physician, far excels all others. There is no disorder can bid him defiance. The most inveterate complaint, and desperate like disease, must yield to his almighty word and touch. He heals all manner of diseases. There are none incurable by him: Nay, so eminent is he in this character and office, that he has only to speak the word, and it shall be done; to issue his orders, and there will be all obedience. He has every disorder under his absolute controul. He has only to say to this and the other one, Go, and they instantly obey. Nay, such is his distinguished excellence, that when he acts as the physician in any instance, he does not merely cure a particular disorder, or only some few complaints; but he cures all disorders whatever: he brings complete health: he makes perfectly whole. — Accordingly we are taught,

7. What

7. What is our indispensable duty, where our great safety lies. Both in the strongest manner point out to us an improvement of Christ as the great physician for ourselves, the giving him employment under this character. We are all of us disordered, and this to a great degree. "Our loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in our flesh." We need a physician to make us whole. In these circumstances, and considering that Christ is distinguished as a physician, is making us welcome to that health and cure which we need, and he has to give; doubtless, if we would make a proper account of his kindness, if we would give him that glory which is his due, and if we would effectually consult our own interests, we are under indispensable obligations to give him employment, and improve him as the great physician. We are too apt to have recourse to other expedients for relief. But we will find all other physicians to be physicians of no value, and that if we would be made whole, we must come to Jesus, for whom nothing is too hard; and our improvement of him should be immediate, instantaneous, and without delay. Our situation demands it; and though a gracious opportunity is now afforded for obtaining health and cure, this will not always be our privilege. Now is the accepted time, and the day of salvation. We know not, however, but it may be *now* or never. Had the impotent man trifled with the gracious call, he would have severely smarted for it. If then there is not a present improvement of this day of merciful visitation, the things that belong to our peace may for ever be hid from our eyes. God may be provoked to swear in his wrath, that we shall not enter into his rest. Beware, then, lest that come upon you: "Behold, ye despisers, wonder, and perish."—We are ascertained,

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8. How

8. How unreasonable, how criminal in its nature, despair and despondence is, while the day of grace lasts with persons, whatever their situation or circumstances are. While Christ, as the great physician, heals all manner of diseases, and invites every one, without exception, to give him employment, despair must be most unreasonable. Doubtless there is not any solid ground, even the smallest, for indulging it in the very worst case; for however woful, it need only be brought to Jesus, and he will give a good account of it. He is both able and willing to bring health and cure; and if our disorders not only may, but actually shall be cured, if a cure is desired, then how unreasonable must it be to despond? Even those who for a long season may have rejected the counsel of this physician, and resisted his gracious calls, his earnest intreaties, are by no means warranted to consider their situation as desperate: for such are expressly invited to improve and employ the Redeemer. "Hearken," says he, "ye stout hearted, and ye that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness to you." "In me is thine help." Nay, that despair and despondence might be the most irrational and absurd thing imaginable, he makes all cases and persons welcome, and gives assurance, that him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. Even that person who, by his unbelief, would exclude himself from his healing virtue, and, whether it was reason or not, would indulge despair; to such the Redeemer presently says, *Wilt thou be made whole?* Nay, sinner, it is very probably on account of thy deplorable case, that he is on this occasion come to the pool, to bring you health and cure. Give him therefore all entertainment: for despondence is not only unreasonable, but in its nature most criminal. It is nothing less than calling God a liar. It is a discrediting

ding the power of the great physician, a distrust-
ing his kindness, a pouring the utmost contempt
upon his gracious offers and invitations; and in
doing all this, you are involving yourselves more
and more in aggravated ruin. Beware of this, then,
Sirs, and while Jesus is making tender of his ser-
vices, and is proposing to make you whole, be per-
suaded to welcome him who thus comes in the name
of God to save you. — We may learn,

In the *last* place, where the blame will lie, if we
perish for ever. This is easily ascertained. It must,
without peradventure, lie at our own doors.
Christ, as the great physician, has come forth in
a gospel-dispensation, and is freely offering us life,
health, himself, with every blessing. He makes all
welcome to come to him, who stand in need of his
assistance. He waits that he may be gracious. He
is wanting employment, that he may make us
whole; and to this end, is urgent and importunate
in his dealings. He is saying, Why will ye die?
In these circumstances, if we perish, to whose ac-
count must this be stated? Doubtless the Redeem-
er is not in the smallest degree to blame. He has
done all that was proper for him to do, to prevent
matters coming to this awful issue. He is highly
dishonoured and displeased that he has not met
with becoming entertainment. The blame, there-
fore, must clearly lie with ourselves. Our ruin is
produced by our wilful obstinacy and perverseness;
which has influenced us to despise the remedy, to
reject the counsel of God against ourselves, and
thus rush headlong upon destruction. Persons
not being made whole, is not because Christ will
not make them whole, but because they will not
come, and be indebted to him for the blessing;
hence their condemnation at the day of judge-
ment will be just, and will more especially turn up-
on this hinge, “The Lord Jesus will be revealed
“in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that

"knew not God, and have not obeyed the gospel
"of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It interests you, my brethren, to inquire, whether or not ye have ever in truth become acquainted with your real state and circumstances by nature, as diseased, as having destroyed yourselves; and whether or not ye have been determined and enabled to improve and employ Jesus as the great physician. We cannot propose to enlarge here; only to assist in examining yourselves upon these important points, we may, in a few words, observe, that if ye have in truth been made acquainted with your real state and character by nature, ye will be sensible, that formerly you were disposed to think very differently in regard to yourselves. You were unwilling to admit the humbling truth, and were fondly persuading yourselves that you were rich, and increased in goods, and stood in need of nothing. You will admit, that nothing short of the influence and operation of the Spirit of all grace was sufficient to produce this; and that the law was specially employed by him to this end. For you was alive without the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and you died. You have had a discovery of your state and character as in Adam, sinning with him, and falling with him in his first transgression, and have had set before you your manifold actual transgressions proceeding from thence. You have had pointed out to you sin in its defiling nature, and high demerit, as being an infinite evil, objectively considered, as having for its wages death. You have seen your inability to help yourselves; that you have destroyed yourselves, and were wholly without strength to counteract that ruin which has befallen you. You have, in short, been convinced of your absolute need of a Saviour, of one that was mighty to bring you from the fearful pit, and

and from the miry clay, as you otherwise must perish; and therefore, pricked in your hearts, you have been made to cry out, What shall I do to be saved?

If you have been determined and enabled to improve and employ Jesus as the great physician, you will be sensible, that even when awakened by the danger to which you were exposed, Christ was not the first refuge to which you had recourse. The natural pride and legal bias of your hearts rose in opposition to this. You will admit, that nothing but dire necessity brought you to the Redeemer; and that you was as an outcast ready to perish when you laid hold upon him. You will allow that the improvement you was enabled to make of him was neither of nor from yourselves, but was the doing of the Lord, the Spirit, the effect of divine power working in you both to will and to do. You have been made acquainted with the suitableness and sufficiency of the Redeemer, and his salvation, to your situation and circumstances. You have had a discovery of the particular warrant and welcome you have afforded you to an improvement of him. His love has been shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. You think much of him; you are aiming at commending him; for he is in your view altogether lovely. You desire to live to his glory in the world; you live upon him; would wish daily to improve him, as all and in all to you. You know something of communion and fellowship with him for the present, and are longing for that uninterrupted and immediate fellowship with him, which shall ere long be enjoyed when you shall see him as he is, behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness. — We conclude the discourse with an address,

1. To those who have the good work begun in them,

them, and are in a progress towards the being made whole;

2. To those who are yet altogether in sin, and wholly diseased.

1. We are first to address those who have the good work begun in them, and are in a progress towards the being made whole. Such we would exhort to bless God for his distinguishing kindness and grace, for that grace which terminated upon you from the ages of eternity, and which in due time has actually abounded towards you, in delivering from the lowest hell, in redeeming your souls from destruction. Give unto the Lord the glory that is his due. Praise him for what he has done in your behalf, what he is doing, and what in the promise he has engaged to do for you. Adore and admire that love and kindness which has drawn you to himself, when you was departing from and rebelling against him; that mercy which was so exceeding great, that when you had destroyed yourselves, and were unable to repair that ruin which had befallen you, laid help upon one that was mighty, and not only made such provision for you, but has also, in the day of power, determined and enabled you to a suitable improvement for yourselves of the glorious physician, from whom virtue has gone forth to the healing of your diseases, and who will in due time make you whole.

—— We beseech you to walk worthy of your privilege. Be much exercised in shewing forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your heavenly Father. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise: Walk in love: walk humbly with your God: Be holy in all manner of conversation.—— Be persuaded

suaded to improve daily your physician: Depend always upon him: Have recourse to him in all your straits; and in every situation, live by faith upon him.——Be continually aiming at exalting him in your thoughts, by your words, and by your whole conduct. Commend him in his glorious excellency. Invite others to an acquaintance with, an improvement of him; and bring many to him, that he may make them whole.——Study to live to his glory. Be zealous for him in your spheres. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Resolve, in the strength of that grace that is with him, to follow him through good and through bad report; to follow him whithersoever he may lead you.——In one word, breathe after more intimate communion and fellowship than you have yet enjoyed. Look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even your Saviour Jesus Christ. Long for that happy time when the shadows shall flee away, and you shall be privileged with the immediate vision and fruition of God and the Lamb; when you shall enter into the palace of the King, there to abide for ever.

Your sweet employ shall then be love,

And all your pleasure praise.

2. We would next address those who are altogether in sin; who are wholly diseased. Such very probably are either entirely insensible of their situation, or are exceeding careless and thoughtless in relation to it. But however otherwise situate, if in sin, if you are diseased, and stand in need of the physician's healing art, we are warranted, we are required, as ambassadors in his name, to demand employment for him from you; to beseech you to come to him for life and health. He is by us saying to you, *Wilt thou be made whole?* The Redeemer
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compassionates your case, and is waiting that he may be gracious. Be persuaded, then, to attend to your situation. It is most dangerous; it is most distressful: The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; there is no soundness in you, but all are wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. And though in so deplorable a condition, you cannot bring the smallest relief to yourselves. The whole creation cannot help you. You stand in absolute need, not only of a physician, but of such a physician as is now come in God's great name to save you. While, therefore, you have access to him, while he is making every person, with their varied disorders, welcome, and is engaging to make them whole, improve, we intreat you, the gracious opportunity which is afforded you: "Incline your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your souls shall live." — Consider, the longer you delay matters, the more dangerous will your situation become. You are labouring under a disease that is not only loathsome, but in its nature deadly; and the longer it prevails, the more alarming will it be. While therefore it is said to-day, Harden not your hearts, but hearken to the Redeemer's voice; see that ye refuse not him that speaketh to you from heaven. — Say not, that you have no proper encouragement to such an improvement of the Redeemer; for whosoever will, may come; and him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. Nay, that every exception may be obviated, he is just addressing you, whoever you are, he is saying, Wilt thou be made whole? — Let not your inability, your unwillingness to embrace the gracious offer, be employed as an argument to restrain that improvement of Jesus to which you are invited. You cannot either have life or strength, but as it proceeds from and is produced by him. Instead of having life or strength previous to an improvement of

of the Redeemer, you must come to him that you may have both; and in coming to him, they will, without peradventure, be imparted to you. He commences his operations in the cure of your wills, removing that rebellion and perverseness which belongs to them. In his day of power, he makes willing; he giveth power to the weak; and to those that are of no might, he increaseth strength. Stretch out, then, the withered hand at his call: Look unto him, and be ye saved; for he is God, and there is no Saviour besides him. — Reflect with what importunity the Redeemer is addressing you. He is most urgent with you, to render him that glory which is his due, and to consult your own eternal welfare, by giving him employment. He is standing with outstretched arms, saying, Behold me, behold me. In accents the most alluring, and by methods the most winning, he is inviting the weary, the heavy laden, to that rest which he has purchased for them; nay, so condescending is he, that he is most enlarged and unlimited in his offers of kindness to you. If a due respect is had to his own glory, you may make any demand whatever, and it shall without fail be complied with: Says he, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? Oh! then, let this amazing love of Jesus constrain you to an improvement of him, as made of God to you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. — In one word, attend; we beseech you, to the dreadful consequences which must ensue your resisting his gracious offer; and you would do well to observe, you must either reject or embrace it; there is no medium. If, then, you finally reject his wholesome counsel, what an awful prospect presents itself to you. Having despised the only remedy, there remains no more sacrifice for sin; and your having done so, as it will be a special ground of your condemnation, so it

will be a special ground of your condemnation, so it

will be a most bitter ingredient in that cup of trembling which will ere long be put into your hands. Snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, will in abundance be measured out to such. If they who despised Moses's law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall those be thought worthy that have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sprinkled an unholy thing, and have done despite to the Spirit of grace! Vengeance is the Lord's, and he will not fail to recompence it. Your anguish will be most extreme; you will have none to commiserate your situation, or afford you the smallest relief; on the contrary, be it known to you, that because, when the Redeemer called, ye would not hearken, when he stretched out his hands, no man regarded; therefore he will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. The righteous will rejoice when he seeth vengeance; and your miserable associates, instead of alleviating, will dreadfully aggravate your woe. To sum all up, the smoke of your torment shall ascend up for ever and for ever. — Such being the direful consequences that must inevitably follow upon impenitent rejection of the gracious offer, in the bowels of compassion, we beseech you to beware of this. As you would glorify God, as you would wish the eternal welfare of your precious souls, and have confidence at the Redeemer's glorious appearance, be persuaded to fly for refuge, and lay hold on that hope, that help, that is now set before you. While the gracious call is, "Return, ye backsliding children," while Jesus is addressing you, *Wilt thou be made whole?* let the language of your hearts and exercise be, "Turn thou us, and we shall be turned; heal thou us, and we shall be healed." "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God."

S E R -

S E R M O N V L

LUKE, i. 68.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited
and redeemed his people.*

THE goodness of God to the sons of men is exceeding great. His kindness and grace has been most eminently displayed. He not only opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing, but is gracious, and delivers from going down to the pit, having himself found a ransom. He thought upon us in our low estate, and laid our help upon one that is mighty: he raised up a chosen one from among the people. Nay, so condescending is he, that he has not only provided help for us, but is also urging upon us a suitable improvement of his kindness. He is saying to us, Wilt thou be made whole? All this, without question, demands a proper return on our part. Well, what return should be made? Doubtless, while a cordial welcome to the offers of his grace should be rendered, our hearts should at the same time be filled with gladness, and our tongues with praises, to the God of our mercies, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should join issue with Zacharias, as in our text, saying, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.*

That

That we may the better understand Zacharias's exercise in the verse before us, it is necessary that we trace the connection betwixt this and the preceding verses. In the beginning of the chapter, we are told, that in the days of Herod, there was a certain priest of the course of Abias, named Zacharias; and that his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, her name Elisabeth. In relation to both of them, it is intimated, that they were righteous before God, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. There is a particular circumstance mentioned, that they had no child, nor a probable prospect of any, in regard they were both now well stricken in years. To be thus situated in those days, was not so agreeable, as with all there was an anxious desire to have children, in expectation of the promised Messiah proceeding from them. But we see the favourites of Heaven are sometimes denied the gifts of his providence. Children are such, the womb's fruit, his reward. In the progress of the chapter, we are informed, that Zacharias, in the order of his course, was executing the priest's office, and that his lot was to burn incense, the whole multitude, in the mean time, being present without. While thus employed, an angel appeared. This vision alarmed Zacharias. The angel comforted him, by declaring what Jehovah was about to do. It would seem, that Zacharias had made the having a child the matter of his supplication before God; and though his prayer was not immediately answered, yet it was not altogether rejected. So far from this, the angel announced that his prayer was heard, nay, was accepted; for in a short time he should have a son, and that he should call his name John. This same child, he intimates, would be an eminent personage, would not only be a blessing, but a blessing indeed. The longer the Lord delays the answer
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of his peoples prayers, the richer ordinarily are the returns which they bring them. This declaration of the angel was so unexpected, and so full of comfort, that Zacharias could by no means give it full credit. He had, it is probable, long since given up with looking after his supplication in relation to a child, so as to expect an answer. He, it would seem, was for the present unmindful, that with Jehovah all things are possible; and therefore, till his unbelief was rebuked, and his faith brought forth into proper exercise, he could not take any benefit from what was intimated by the angel. Hence, in reply, he thus expressed himself: "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years;" in effect representing, that what was proposed was so improbable, that he could not for the present give it credit; or at least, if he should be prevailed upon so far, it could only be in the event of his having afforded him some sensible earnest and evidence of what in due time would be. Well, Zacharias had asked a sign, and a sign was given him, in which there was a striking mixture of mercy and judgement. Unbelief is a crime of the most heinous nature. God will ever pursue his quarrel against it. He will not fail to express his displeasure on this ground, even when it is found with his own people, as was the case in the present instance. Hence the angel thus addressed him: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." In this sentence it is observable, that while it was in part an evidence and effect of divine displeasure, a just chastisement for his folly, it was at the same time a striking display of the divine kindness, as being an earnest of what Jehovah

vah was, in his time, to do for him. Such are all the chastisements which the Lord's people have measured out to them. Though no affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous, it is nevertheless precious seed, which in its season yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. But to proceed: As the angel had pronounced, so it turned out. Zacharias became instantly dumb; and remained in this situation until there was an exact fulfilment of all that had been spoken. As the Lord does not grieve his people wantonly, or afflict them without a cause, so neither does he continue contending longer with them than is absolutely necessary for his glory, and their good. Hence, in the present instance, it is obvious, that no sooner was the purpose which he had in view by his visitation upon Zacharias fully accomplished, than as, delighting in mercy, it was removed: For though to his own people he be sometimes wroth, it is only for a small moment that he is so. With everlasting kindness he returns, and will have mercy upon them. Accordingly, in the 64th verse it is represented, that divine faithfulness having been sufficiently displayed, and Zacharias duly humbled, his unbelief corrected, and his faith strengthened, his tongue was loosed, Jehoyah's anger, and the evidences of it, are turned away from him. The Lord remembered for him his mercy; and the kindness he experienced on this occasion had a proper effect. Upon his closed lips being opened, and his tongue loosed, this doubtless called for songs of praise and thanksgiving from him. Well, as was incumbent upon him he was exercised. Being filled with the Holy Ghost, and so qualified for the sweet employ, he, with holy rapture, breaks out into that instructive and prophetic hymn of praise contained in the verse before us, and the following, saying, "Blessed
" be

"be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited
 "and redeemed his people." *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.*
 In which words we have presented to us, Zacharias's exercise, with the grounds upon which it proceeded.

We have, in the *first* place, Zacharias's exercise. He was employed in praising and blessing God. Though he had newly got a son, the peculiar gift of Heaven; yet this by no means had the chief room in his heart, or ingrossed his whole attention. Had such been the case, it would have been a sorry return to the Lord for his kindness. The blessing lately vouchsafed had special influence in turning his heart and eyes towards the Lord, the God of Israel, as the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift doth come, and who was the God of his mercies. While he contemplated his love and kindness, he was desirous to render unto the Lord for his benefits, to give him that glory which was his due; and, as the only proper return competent to him, he cries out, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.* He did not do this in an authoritative or efficacious manner, as if he could have made good what he said. This was altogether impossible. He whom he thus celebrates is essentially, infinitely blessed in and of himself. He is higher than the highest, and dependent upon none. Zacharias, therefore, in thus expressing himself, could only have in view an acknowledgement, a celebration of what Jehovah, the God of Israel, was in himself, what he was to him; an ascription of that honour and homage which he considered as his due on the present occasion. Being under indispensable obligations, he aimed at shewing forth the honour of Jehovah's name, and making his praise glorious. He would acknowledge himself deeply indebted to that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ; and would

offer unto God thanksgivings. Every renewed mercy, as received, should have influence to stir up all that is within us to bless the glorious giver, and magnify his holy name.

It is worthy of observation, the distinguished characters under which Zacharias viewed the object of his praise. He considered him as the Lord, as his own God, and as the God of Israel. He considered him as the Lord, as the true, supreme, independent, self-existent Jehovah, as infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, rich in mercy, and possessed of all possible perfections; that he ought to be feared, and had in reverence; this being an honour which was his due, and which was the rather incumbent upon him to render, in regard the blessing vouchsafed was a display of absolute sovereignty, what he was under no obligations to confer, farther than seemed good in his sight. But not only did he contemplate the object of his praise as the Lord, but also, and specially, as his own God. This, though not explicitly expressed, is evidently pointed out in his addressing him as the God of Israel: For while Jehovah, absolutely considered, is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity, an object of terror and dread to such; while it is only faith's views of him as in Christ pacified towards them, notwithstanding all that they have done, a believing improvement of him as the person's own God, that produces and influences acceptable exercise in any instance: in like manner, it is obvious, that persons can never have becoming views of the Lord as the God of Israel, but when, in these views, they are ascending from that particular interest they themselves have in him, as belonging to Israel, and as their own God; and in this way are perceiving him to be the God of all such; are hence claiming for themselves, for others, a joint common interest in him as their God and

and portion; and are celebrating him accordingly. Zacharias contemplating the Lord as his God, was not only proper in itself, but also highly beneficial to him. It served greatly to enhance the blessing received, which thus proceeded not only from the Lord, but from the Lord his God, and so was in its nature a new-covenant blessing; and every thing that a real Christian receives as such, must be viewed in the same manner.

It is farther to be observed, that Zacharias not only considered the Lord as his God, but also as the God of Israel. From the experience he had of God's goodness towards him, he not only claimed an interest in him for himself, but also a common interest in him for all the spiritual Israel in general; and he had the most sufficient grounds to proceed upon. The Lord having approved himself to be mindful of his prayers, and attentive to his wrestlings as an Israelite; and being the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, he might from thence warrantably conclude, that what he had been to him, he would be to all such; and so not only his God, but the God of Israel in general; and that he is the God of all such specially, as being the God of Israel, his servant, in whom he was about to be illustriously glorified. Zacharias had besides particular reasons for celebrating him as the God of Israel on this occasion, in regard the kindness he was made to experience was a peculiar evidence that the Lord was the God of Israel; that he was mindful of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for the blessing vouchsafed was not only a blessing to him, but also to many others; a sure pledge and earnest of those glorious things which were spoken concerning the city of God, and which would in due time be accomplished, in order to the more abundant display of this his name as the God of Israel; and Zacharias would never have made

a proper account of the Lord's kindness towards him, unless he had been thus exercised. In like manner, we never make a right estimate of mercies received, or a suitable improvement of the Lord as our God; but when, in the one case, we view mercies received as a security for those other great and good things the Lord will farther do, not only for us, but also for others; nor, in the other case, do we make a suitable improvement of the Lord as our God; but when we are considering him not only as such, but also as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all his spiritual seed, as the common Father of the saved by grace; and we may add, that it exceedingly heightens the blessing, the common interest and relation which each thus have in God, and through him in one another, and all by Christ, the centre of union, the glorious meeting-place for an offended God and offending sinners.

But as we have Zacharias's exercise, so we have the grounds upon which this proceeded. These were most sufficient, and are thus expressed: *He hath visited and redeemed his people*. We have here a gracious event referred to, and a glorious effect flowing from thence mentioned. We have a gracious event referred to: *He hath visited*. This doubtless points out that gracious visit which Jehovah the God of Israel hath made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son, when, in the fulness of time, he was sent into our world, to serve and suffer as the Surety of a better testament; the nature of which visit will afterwards be more particularly attended to. The glorious effect flowing from thence, as stated, is, *He hath redeemed his people*. This evidently refers to that spiritual salvation and redemption which was wrought for sinners, and is the fruit and effect of this gracious visit.

visit. This also will in its nature be a full illustration.

It is worth remarking, that though God, if we may thus express ourselves, was as it were only beginning to manifest forth his glory, and to commence that visit which he had promised to make in the incarnation of his eternal Son; though that redemption which was in due time to be accomplished was only in the bud, or, if you will, in embryo, though all this was the case when Zacharias uttered these words; yet he considered and spoke of them as if events already past. What was the reason? Why, he saw so much of divine faithfulness and grace in his procedure towards Israel in former periods, and towards himself in the present instance; he perceived matters so rapidly hastening towards a crisis, and all in conformity to what had been declared in ancient prophecies; he discerned such evident openings, and had such assurance given him as to the full accomplishment of the whole of God's purpose and grace towards the sons of men, that he could with confidence speak of these events as already past, though they were only about to be realised; nay, he not only speaks of them, but such assurance had he in relation to them, that he praises and blesses God expressly on these grounds; or perhaps, perceiving that now the appointed period approached, when Christ was about to pay down the price of our redemption, he, as it were, looked backwards and forwards; backwards to what God had done for his people in former times, in visiting and redeeming them, and this upon the footing of the Surety's undertaking as in due time to be accomplished; and he looks forwards to what the Lord was doing, and would do, for his people, to the end of the world, in consequence of this work being completely finished; and so would bless the Lord for all his goodness and grace, comprehending the whole in

one delightful song of praise, saying, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.*

These words teach us,

That the gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath made us, in the incarnation of the eternal Son, and the accomplishment of redemption by it, afford the highest grounds for praise and thanksgiving; and when persons, from just views of these blessings, are making a proper account and improvement of them, they will be thus exercised.

In discoursing from this subject, we may,

I. Offer some observations concerning that visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son.

II. Consider the nature of that redemption which was accomplished by it.

III. Confirm the truth of the proposition.

IV. Conclude with some improvement.

I. It is proposed to offer some observations concerning that gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath made us in the incarnation of his eternal Son. And here we would observe,

1. That it was of a nature very different from those visits with which Jehovah favoured his ancient people as a nation. In all ages and periods, the Lord has been mindful of his church. He hath set them as a seal upon his arm, as a seal upon his heart; and therefore he can never forget them, or neglect their interests. Hence, whenever they need his interposition, or would be the better of those blessings which he has to give, he graciously condescends to visit them, delivers them out of their distresses, and filleth the hungry with good things. Thus he visited the children of Israel, when in the land

land of Egypt, in the house of bondage. He saw the oppression and violence which they suffered: He heard the cry of their distress, and came for their deliverance: He visited them in mercy; sent Moses his servant, and, with an high hand and an outstretched arm, led them forth; he made them pass safely through the depths, conducted them through the wilderness, and at length brought them to the earthly Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. Thus also he visited them when oppressed by Midian, by Amalek, by Moab, and by the children of Ammon. He heard the groanings of the prisoners; he visited them in their afflictions; he raised up judges to save and deliver them: Nay, though he suffered them to be carried captives to Babylon, yet even there he thought upon them in their low estate, and rescued them out of the hands of their enemies. In like manner, he visited them, when he conferred various blessings upon them both of a spiritual and temporal nature. He gave the Canaanites into their hands, and their lands to them for a possession. He raised up judges to judge them, and gave them kings to reign over them. He eminently visited them, in erecting, in establishing his worship and service among them. He hallowed his ordinances, qualified and consecrated persons for his service. In short, from time to time, he sent them prophets to reprove and correct them for their evil doings, and their ways that were not good, to guide them in the way of truth, and to declare to them the tidings of grace and salvation. He did not deal so with any other nation. Thus he visited his ancient people; but though highly favoured, all the visits which he made them were of a nature truly different from that he has paid us in the incarnation of the eternal Son. As the redemption of mankind is justly allowed to be the chief of his ways

ways of God; so that visit which he made in order to its accomplishment, may, with the fullest propriety, be considered as the most pre-eminent instance of his kindness; as truly distinguished from, nay, as superior to all the other visits which he formerly made. Almost the whole of those visits which Jehovah made his ancient people were of a typical nature, and plainly pointed out, as well as looked forwards to that more important visit which, in the fullness of time, he was to make in the person of the eternal Son, in which they met with a full accomplishment. Besides, these visits were, for the most part, of a temporal nature, and primarily respected some outward deliverance, or some temporal good; whereas this visit is entirely of a spiritual nature, as being specially subservient to relieve from spiritual distresses, and to confer spiritual blessings. Moreover, God's visits in former times respected chiefly the Jewish nation, or at farthest those few who were connected with them as proselytes; whereas this visit looked with the most benign aspect towards the whole of the human race, and comprehended within its powerful influence some out of all kindreds, tongues, nations, and people. In fine, all the former visits which the God of Israel made his people, were only by his servants, under different characters, and in different capacities. But this visit, as being of a more important nature than all the preceding, was made in the person of the eternal Son. "Last of all, he sent his Son, saying, 'They will reverence him.'" Thus the Apostle to the Hebrews states the matter: "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son."

2. We observe, that this visit was made in consequence of the eternal purpose of grace by Jehovah the Father, in order to accomplish the eternal undertaking

dertaking in which Jehovah the Son engaged, to the end of procuring eternal redemption for those who were given him; and that a glorious solid foundation might be laid for the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit in carrying into execution the eternal purpose of grace to its full extent in the experience of all those upon whom it did originally terminate.

The eternal love of the Father, that purpose of grace which God had for a select number of mankind before the world began, is to be considered as the grand source of all spiritual blessings which have been or can ever be enjoyed by the sons of men. As this is the case in every instance, it is eminently so with respect to the visit of which we now speak; it was doubtless in consequence of the eternal purpose of grace that such an event had an existence. Known to God are all things from the beginning. This is the fact more especially in relation to all his gracious dispensations towards his people. These are not only obvious to, but also expressly determined upon by him, as to be accomplished in due time. God having from all eternity foreseen that the first man, when in covenant with him, would deal treacherously, would rebel against him, and so would involve the whole human race in ruin; moved with pity and compassion towards a select number, he entertained a purpose of grace and good will for them: and in order to this his gracious purpose taking effect in a full consistency with his own glory, this visit was determined upon as absolutely necessary to this end, and what in due time should actually be accomplished; the one being the glorious channel through which the other was to flow forth towards its favoured objects. To this purpose the Apostle Paul, when taking a retrospect view of this visit, and the gracious effects it had upon him and other believers,

believers, traces the whole up to this source, and, in explicit terms, pronounces that this, as well as all other gracious dispensations, do evidently result from the eternal purpose in the divine mind, as their grand original; says he, Eph. iii. 8. 10. 11. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; ~~and~~ to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

As this visit was made in consequence of the eternal purpose of grace by God the Father; so also it was in order to accomplish that undertaking which God the Son, from the ages of eternity, had brought himself under, to the end of procuring redemption for those that were given him, and whom he actually represented in his service and sufferings. The counsel of peace was between them both, according to what the Prophet Zacharias declares, chap. vi. 13. As Jehovah the Father proposed the plan and method of salvation; so Jehovah the Son willingly undertook its accomplishment in due time, and hence brought himself under an explicit engagement. We have the matter expressly stated, Psal. xl. 6. 7. 8. He thus became bound to visit our lower world, to assume human nature, to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, that for sin, he might condemn sin in the flesh. It is obvious that it was in virtue of the eternal engagement, that, in the fulness of time, Christ came into our lower world. It was in order that he might fulfil the eternal undertaking, in all its extent, that he paid us this visit at the time appointed, and for a season dwelt amongst us. In proof of this, we have the pointed testimony of Christ himself. When his harbinger

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John declined to baptise him, though expressly desired, Jesus urged him to a compliance, with observing, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," Matth. iii. 15.; and, in like manner, when the disciples were much discouraged and distressed, on account of the sufferings and ignominy which he had endured, he silenced and comforted them, by representing how indispensably necessary all these were to the character he sustained, and the capacity in which he acted: "Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke, xxiv. 26. By all which he evidently intimated, that it was specially in order to fulfil that undertaking in which he had engaged, that he paid us this visit, and submitted to the various events which had occurred during its continuance; nay, so much had he this visit upon his heart, so intent was he to accomplish it in its season, so mindful was he of, and so pleased was he with his undertaking, that long before the appointed period for his assuming human nature had arrived, even from eternity, "he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

It is farther to be observed, that this visit was made not only in consequence of the eternal purpose of the Father, and in order to fulfil the eternal undertaking of the Son, but also that a glorious solid foundation might be laid for the all-powerful agency of the Holy Spirit, in carrying into execution the eternal purpose of grace to its full extent, in the experience of all those upon whom it did originally terminate. The three persons of the glorious Godhead were severally and unitedly employed in accomplishing the redemption of mankind. They had common and distinct operations in this important work; and in all their procedure there was a glorious subserviency of every part to the whole. Each per-

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son, in his working, concurred with, and as it were facilitated the progress of the other in his managements. Without this, the astonishing event, in all its glory, could not have been realized. While it was the Father's work to purpose and plan this redemption; while it was the work of the Son to purchase, and the work of the Holy Spirit to make application; there was evidently a glorious subserviency in every part to the whole. The Father's purpose and grace could not effectually flow out till once these obstructions which stood in its way were removed, and an honourable egress afforded. This laid the foundation for, this rendered necessary the purchase of the Son, which, in its nature, was subservient to what was required; for he became engaged to render the eternal purpose of grace effectual to remove every thing which prevented its flowing forth in the most abundant manner to all its objects, that Jehovah might be the just God and the Saviour: and while this visit, with the work which was performed during its continuance, opened up an honourable egress for the eternal purpose of grace; in like manner, it laid a glorious solid foundation for the all-powerful agency of the Spirit in the work of redemption. While every undertaker in the work is to be considered as acting most voluntarily, so he must be viewed, when engaging, and when acting, as having a becoming respect both to the glory of the divine nature, and to the honour of his own personal operations. Accordingly, as the eternal purpose of the Father proceeded in the way of having an entire respect to the glorious channel through which it was to take effect; in like manner, the Holy Spirit having engaged to carry into execution the eternal purpose of grace to its full extent, in the experience of all those upon whom it did originally terminate; he did so also in the way of having a respect

spect to this important visit, which in its nature was subservient to render an entering upon this work honourable to him, and beneficial to those for whom he was to exert himself. Without this he could have had no proper ground to proceed upon; but having this solid foundation laid, he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Hence it is observable, that no sooner was this visit in all its extent accomplished, and the work accepted, than instantly the Holy Spirit, in an eminent manner, was poured out, and his operations signally commenced in the hearts of sinners; upon the matter intimating, that in virtue of what had been accomplished upon Mount Calvary, and in consequence of his eternal undertaking to this end, he was now eminently, as he could, with the utmost honour to himself, do it, to be engaged in carrying forwards into execution the eternal purpose of grace: and as the Holy Spirit, under the Old-Testament dispensation, acted in the hearts of the chosen ones, in a dependence upon what Christ in the fulness of time was to realise; so, under the New-Testament dispensation, Jesus having fulfilled his undertaking, he, on his part, fully depends upon the Holy Spirit's exerting himself in the hearts of all who were given him; and so encourages his people with the glorious prospect, and with gracious promises, ascertaining their enjoyment of this blessing in due time.

3. This visit was early predicted and promised, and gradually made known; and the nigher its accomplishment, the more clearly revealed. It was early predicted and promised. No sooner did man destroy himself by sin, and in consequence need the divine interposition, than the prospect of relief was opened up. This visit, in most explicit terms, was predicted and promised. To this purpose we may consult Gen. iii. 15. where ruin is predicted to the

serpent and his interests, and relief promised to the woman and her seed: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Nay, this visit, with its glorious effects, was spoke of and promised from the ages of eternity, according to what is pointed out by the apostle, in his epistle to Titus, ch. i. 2. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." But if eternal life was promised so early, surely that through which it could only be enjoyed was at the same time also ascertained. As this visit was early predicted and promised, so it was gradually made known; and the higher its accomplishment, the more clearly revealed. At the first it was but obscurely pointed at, and in consequence required much spiritual discernment to comprehend and profit by this mystery, which, as the apostle intimates, was hid for ages and generations. By degrees, however, it was more particularly and plainly unfolded to the church in succeeding periods; and the nature as well as certainty of this visit represented to faith, under various types and shadows, prophecies and promises; all which were in due time fulfilled by it; and when the accomplishment of it drew nigh, there was still a clearer and fuller revelation made than ever before. Accordingly, with what distinctness, nay accuracy, does the prophet Isaiah express himself as to this matter; inasmuch that his prophecy, in many instances, may be considered rather as affording a detail of events already past, than as referring to what only in due time was to be accomplished? The same may be affirmed of various other prophets; more especially such of them as lived and prophesied nearest the time of his coming. With what particularity and exactness do the prophets Micah, Zecharias, and Malachi,

Malachi, deliver themselves in relation to this gracious visit; more particularly in the 4th and 5th chapters of Micah; in the 3d, 6th, and 9th chapters of Zecharias, and the 3d chapter of Malachi; in all which, as well as in the prophecy of Isaiah at large, and in many passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with the other prophets, particularly Daniel, this event is not only mentioned, but discoursed of, with greater clearness and confidence than by those who went before them? Hence that revelation which was made of it at first, may be considered as the dawning of the morning; those openings which were experienced during the patriarchal age may be compared to day-break; those discoveries which were enjoyed during and immediately before the time when the spirit of prophecy was poured out, may be likened to the increasing light of the morning, and to the rising of the sun. Thus did Jehovah, the God of Israel, prepare the way for ushering in this important event of which we now speak. To this purpose the prophet Malachi expresses himself, chap. iv. 2. : Says he, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise;" not merely in obscurity, as viewed under types and shadows, or clouded with prophetic allusions, but as shining with the fullest lustre and brightness, and fraught with healing in his wings.

4. This visit was the consolation of the saints in former periods, and at the time when it actually commenced was patiently waited for by many in Israel. As this event was early predicted and promised, as it was gradually revealed, in consequence it could not fail to be much observed by those to whom such discoveries were afforded; and when a proper attention was rendered, it could as little fail to be a ground of consolation to them. Doubtless, this was one great design which God had in view when making those discoveries; and persons never

made a proper account of his goodness in this instance, unless they were aiming at such an improvement. Nay, such regard had God to this visit, and the astonishing effects which it should produce, that all the good which he vouchsafed to the saints under the Old-Testament dispensation, all the consolation which they enjoyed, proceeded entirely upon the footing of this event, as what in due time would infallibly be accomplished. The fact is, God's goodness could never in any period consistently flow forth to the sons of men, but in the way of having a special respect to this visit, as the glorious channel through which his mercy and grace abound to the chief of sinners. Hence, how carefully does this appear to be kept in view during the time preceding its actual accomplishment! how frequently are we admonished, that Jehovah's interposition in behalf of his ancient people in this and in the other instance was not for works of righteousness which they had done, but expressly for his name's sake, that his mighty power might be made known, and the exceeding riches of his grace displayed in his kindness towards them through Christ Jesus!

As divine goodness could not flow forth but in this channel, it was at the same time the grand source of all the consolation which Old-Testament saints could possibly enjoy. Man having, by his rebellion and apostacy from God, offended him, and incurred his displeasure, no solid peace could in reality be experienced by any till once a sufficient prospect was opened up, ascertaining how the divine displeasure might be averted, and a reconciliation effected. This visit, which Jehovah, in the person and incarnation of the eternal Son, was to make, being the ordinance of God to this end, of course it behoved to be the grand source of consolation to Old-Testament saints. It could only be in
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virtue of their arriving at some distinct apprehensions of this visit, and their particular interest in it, that they could ever experience that joy and peace which is in believing. Hence such as were possessed of a spiritual discernment saw Christ's day afar off, and rejoiced. This is expressly affirmed of Abraham by our Saviour himself, John, viii. 56. and is no less true with respect to all the genuine children of faithful Abraham under that dispensation. While their persons and services could only be accepted on this ground, it behoved to be foreseen, and improved to this end. Thus was it with good old Jacob, Gen. xlix. when taking farewell of his family, and leaving them his patriarchal benediction: after being led out to speak of the Messiah, and that visit which in due time he was to make, he, in the 18th verse, as it were makes a pause, and, after recollecting within himself what should have been, and what in truth was, his exercise with respect to it, he makes an immediate appeal to Jehovah himself upon the subject: Says he; "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" as if he had thus expressed himself: "O Lord, having
" through thy goodness been enabled in some sort
" to discern that the Shiloh shall come, and that
" to him shall the people be gathered, I have all
" along been aiming at taking the comfort of this
" important event, as specially interested in it. I
" have lived in the believing confidence of its ac-
" tual accomplishment in due time, and have ac-
" cordingly been looking forwards to it. I would
" desire to depart in this confidence, and with my
" last breath would I declare my assured belief in
" this important event. This has been my sup-
" port through life, amidst all the adverse visita-
" tions I have met with. It will be my stay in the
" gloomy valley, and shadow of death, when I
" come to the swellings of Jordan; and this shall
" be

"be the ground-work of ceaseless praises through the ages of eternity."

And as thus it was with Jacob, so with many others, in the different periods of that dispensation; more especially as the set time approached when this event was actually to be accomplished, there were severals who were anxiously waiting for and expecting the coming of the Messiah, his appearance in human nature. In particular we learn from the following chapter to where our text lies, that Simeon, and Anna the prophets, were waiting for the consolation of Israel, i. e. for the actual manifestation of him who was the desire of all nations, and would be the consolation not only of Israel, but of the Gentile world; for to him shall the gathering of the people be. But though all this was the fact, we have to observe,

5. That this visit, when it was actually made, was much misapprehended by all, and even by those who waited for redemption in Israel. There is nothing we are more ready to err in than our construction of divine dispensations. Our views of matters are so partial and so limited, so corrupt, carnal, and so selfish, that we are very apt to form mistaken notions in relation to the divine procedure, whether favourable or frowning; and this even sometimes when the nature of his procedure is very obvious. This was strikingly the case in the present instance. Though this visit was early predicted and promised; though it was gradually made known, and before the time of its actual accomplishment, more clearly revealed; though it was in some measure the consolation of saints in former ages, and patiently waited for by many at the time about which it was actually made, and in consequence should not have been a matter as to which they were ignorant or unacquainted; yet, strange as it may seem, it is an undoubted fact, that when it

it actually commenced, it was an event much misapprehended. The greater part of persons who then lived being sunk in deep darkness and gross ignorance as to spiritual matters, it is probable, were altogether indifferent and unconcerned about this visit, and of course, if they were at all attentive, could have no proper notions with respect to it, their views rising no higher than what present appearances might dictate. Even with those who were more immediately interested in the event, and who, it might have been expected, would have had some distinct and solid apprehensions, yet, alas! how erroneously did they construct in relation to the nature and design of this visit! Accustomed to temporal deliverances, to striking displays of the divine power and goodness in accomplishing these for them, the views of too many, it would appear, rose no higher. They were under the Roman yoke, were at that period in bondage; and hence apprehended, that the special design of this visit was to recover them from their thralldom, and to restore the kingdom to Israel. They had departed so far from God, that their apprehensions were become very carnal and corrupt; and so were not able fully or distinctly to discern the spiritual nature of this visit, the special design on account of which Christ came into the world. Though Jesus was at all due pains to instruct in the mysteries of the kingdom, yet all seemed, in a great measure, slow of heart, and dull in apprehending him. Even his disciples themselves, as well as others, were deeply chargeable in this respect: Accordingly, after his death, they spake of him as a person whom they expected to have redeemed Israel, viz. from under the Roman yoke; and conformable to this view, they are represented as inquiring at him the time, and if it would be the present, when he would restore the kingdom to Israel. We are far from

from thinking that there were none who had any distinct apprehensions of this visit; we only mean to notice the effect which apostacy had, and the progress which corruption made even amongst God's peculiar people, and to remark the improper entertainment which this important event in consequence received with all, and even with those from whom much better might have been expected.

6. This visit was never rightly apprehended till after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when, by his Spirit, he fully instructed them in the things pertaining to the kingdom. In the preceding observation, we have seen, that with all, and even with the disciples of Jesus themselves, this event, for a considerable space, was much misapprehended. Though the fact of his appearance could not be denied, yet the nature of the visit was but in part understood, and the design of it very imperfectly apprehended; and this continued to be the case till after Christ's resurrection and ascension. Hence, as has already been noticed, the disciples, who, it is to be supposed, would be as well acquainted with the matter as any, discovered their ignorance and misapprehension, both after his death and burial, and even after his resurrection. It was not till the abundant outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ, and shewed these to them, that they were enabled in a proper manner to apprehend and improve this visit. Christ's resurrection and ascension were the concluding and most striking proofs of his mission. These, therefore, must have an existence before the evidence with respect to it could be completed; in consequence, whatever convictions or apprehensions they might have upon this subject, it could not be a full, a distinct persuasion which they entertained, while the grounds upon which it was to proceed were imperfect. Besides,

fides, this whole matter, as being of a spiritual nature, could by no means be properly understood without the special influences and illumination of the Holy Spirit to this end. But the Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified. The gift of the Spirit was to be the special fruit of Christ's ascension. Hence he said, "If I go away, "I will send the Comforter unto you; and he will "teach you all things, and bring all things to your "remembrance. He shall testify of me, and ye "also shall bear witness." Accordingly, in the prospect of all this being verified, Jesus, when taking leave of his disciples, ordained them to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high; for till once this was their privilege, their misapprehensions would neither be corrected nor removed. But no sooner did the Holy Ghost, at the time referred to, descend in a plentiful effusion upon them, than their mistakes were corrected, their misconstructions rectified, and they brought in a full and clear manner to apprehend both the nature and design of this gracious visit, with all that related to it. Hence, instead of any longer considering him as a temporal Saviour, or his kingdom to be of this world, they, upon the best grounds, acknowledged him to be both Lord and Christ. Instead of any more seeking after a temporal deliverance, or thinking he was only to accomplish this for them, their views rose much higher, were vastly more enlarged; and in consequence they recognised him as having, by his obedience unto death, acquired a rightful title to dispense spiritual blessings. In short, instead of grasping after worldly honours and preferments, as they before did, they prided themselves in being the witnesses of his humbled estate, as well as of his resurrection and ascension. They boasted in having the honour to be the heralds of peace and pardon

to a guilty world, through a crucified Redeemer; and were ready to rejoice in all reproach and sufferings they met with for the name and testimony of Jesus; as now perceiving, that if they suffer with and for him, they shall also reign with him, and be glorified together.

7. This visit was much needed, nay, indispensably necessary to the present, the eternal welfare of mankind. It was not a visit merely of unmeaning ceremony or bare respect, and which, therefore, might have been dispensed with, without any material injury; it was indispensably necessary, and this from a variety of considerations. As has already in part been stated, it was necessary, in order to open up a way through which the eternal purpose of grace might consistently take effect, and mercy abound to the chief of sinners. However much God might will the recovery of a select number of Adam's ruined family, and purpose to extend his compassion towards them; yet we are not to imagine that he either willed or purposed that such should take effect, but in a way honourable to himself, and consistent with the rights of his glorious perfections; and that all this might be, it was necessary that this visit should be made; during the continuance of which, such attention would be given to the honour of the divine law, and the rights of the divine perfections, by the glorious visitor, as that the result would be, in mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other; nay, the whole of the divine attributes harmonising, in the most wonderful manner, and as it were outvying each other, in promoting the abundant egress and efficacy of the eternal purpose. This visit was also necessary on the part of Christ himself, that he might fulfil that eternal undertaking in which he had engaged, and that a glorious solid foundation might be laid for the
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the all-powerful agency of the eternal Spirit in the work of redemption,—but of these before.

Moreover, this visit was indispensably necessary to the accomplishment of the various types and shadows, prophecies and promises, under the Old-Testament dispensation, all of which pointed out; looked forwards to, and were fulfilled in Christ, were rendered substantial blessings by his coming into our world. But without this, all the types and shadows would have become in a great measure empty and unmeaning; the prophecies would have proved false and ill-founded; and the promises would, in every respect, have failed; for it was only in him, and by his coming, that they could become yea and amen. So that in this view there was a necessity for that visit which was made us.

Besides, it was necessary, it could not be dispensed with; for otherwise the present, the eternal welfare of mankind could not have been effectually promoted: Without it there would have been no redemption. Mankind had plunged themselves into an abyss of guilt and misery; had rendered God their enemy, their vindictive adversary: and though this was their unhappy situation, they, by their utmost efforts, were utterly incapable of extricating themselves out of this state: even angels, the whole host of heaven, though they had been willing, yet the utmost exertion of their exalted powers would have been insufficient to procure the smallest relief.—All refuge thus failed.—There was no eye to pity, nor hand effectually to help, among creatures; and perished the whole human race inevitably must! had not infinite wisdom proposed, and infinite love engaged for the accomplishment of this gracious visit. Hence, says Jehovah, by the prophet Hosea, chap. xiii. 9.: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.” And to
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the same purpose are these remarkable expressions, and they are Christ's own words, Isaiah, lxiii. 5. :
" I looked, and there was none to help; I won-
" dered that there was none to uphold: therefore
" mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and
" my fury, it upheld me."

All which, as well as an attention to the thing itself, serve to declare that there could have been no redemption from wrath and woe, no enjoyment of the divine favour, or of any spiritual blessing whatever, without such an event had a previous existence.

8. This visit was much dreaded by the powers of darkness. No sooner was man ruined by the power and policy of hell, than recovery from that ruin was promised and secured. Deserved vengeance was denounced against the powers of darkness, in resentment of their subtile and malicious conduct, and all this was proposed through the accomplishment of this visit in due time. This event therefore could not fail to be much dreaded by the powers of darkness, in regard that by it the extent of their dominion, with the influence of their power, would be diminished, and deserved vengeance would light upon them on account of their rebellion and mischief. The Redeemer by his coming was to bruise Satan's head, to bind the strong man, and to spoil him of his goods: He was to spoil principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly, as undoubted trophies of his victory: He was to destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. This could not fail to strike them with terror, and provoke, as far as in their power, their resentment. Hence it is observable, that in every period, before the coming of Christ, there appeared the most obvious symptoms of their dreading the approach of this event. How indefatigable were they

they in their attempts to have it, if possible, prevented.

In the first place, by the general corruption which they got introduced into the first ages of the world, and in which they were but too successful, when, doubtless, they apprehended that they had got their design accomplished; afterwards, when undeceived in their expectations, and in the persons of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they still perceived the probability of this event; how assiduous were they in their endeavours, till they got the children of Israel into bondage, and with them, in their view, this event again in their power!

When this prospect failed them, and the children of Israel were delivered out of their bondage, brought into sure possessions, and taken under the immediate care and cognifance of Jehovah himself, in consequence of which they had still more reason than ever to dread the approach of this event; how much did they seem alarmed! and hence how attentive and persevering were they in introducing and propagating corruptions and abominations of various kinds among God's peculiar people; leading them astray to one evil course after another; tempting them to add iniquity to sin, and to abound so much in provocations, that in this way, when every other resource failed them, they might accomplish their purpose; flattering themselves that they would prevail with those very people for whom this visit was intended; and through the loins of one of whom it could only take effect: We say, flattering themselves they would prevail so far with them, that their corruptions would become so increased, their provocations would be so grievous, and their transgressions so heinous, that Divine Justice would be incensed, and exasperated to such an height, as to be rendered inexorable; nay, even to occasion

God's repenting of his gracious intention in relation to them, so as that he should reverse it?

You will also observe, the nigher this event approached, the more incessant and vigorous were they in their exertions to promote this hellish design; and their efforts had but too striking an effect: For, at the period of Christ's appearance, the wickedness of man was truly great: Iniquity had made such advances that divine vengeance, as it were, could no longer have been restrained from pouring out its full floods, and sweeping away the human race in its irresistible torrents, had not the Saviour actually appeared, and, by his standing in the gap, turned away the fierceness of divine anger.

Nay, such enmity had the powers of darkness against this visit, and so much did they dread its effect, that even after Christ appeared on earth, and the certainty of its accomplishment, in its utmost extent, seemed most undoubted, yet they did not cease employing all their arts and subtle devices, if possible, to have it counteracted, or at least rendered in some sort abortive. Hence, what opposition did Christ meet with from them, while he was on earth! How many enemies did they stir up against him! What difficulties and obstructions did they contrive to impede his progress! nay, their malice was levelled at his very life, in the confidence that, could this be effected, all would still be secure. In this last scheme they were indeed in so far gratified. When this visit was predicted, it had been foretold, that the serpent should be permitted to bruise the Saviour's heel. But, though this was permitted, it was at the same time secured, that the seed of the woman should make dreadful reprisals; so that the bruising of his heel, which was but a slight injury, and a momentary pain, should be followed with the Redeemer's exerting his arm of power, by which he would effectually bruise Satan's head: in this way
strike

strike a decisive blow, and at once put an end to the conflict. Thus was eminently accomplished that expression, Job, v. 13.: "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the forward is carried headlong." For Jesus by death destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. By yielding in so far to the vigorous struggles of his adversary, he parried the stroke, and obtained a complete victory.

All which being considered, there is doubtless strong evidence afforded, both that the powers of darkness did dread, and had reason to dread this visit; for in its consequences it was most fatal to their interests. When it was finished, the glorious Redeemer, having spoiled principalities and powers, ascended up on high, leading captivity captive.

S E R M O N · VII.

LUKE, i. 68.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited,
and redeemed his people.*

THough we have already offered several observations in relation to that gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son, we have yet to add,

9. That it was made in the fulness of time. This the apostle expressly ascertains in his epistle to the Galatians, chap. iv. 4.; says he, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law." The wise man informs us, there is a time for every thing under the sun, and for every purpose a season. This is eminently the fact, in relation to all God's workings towards the children of men. God is a God of order, and if we may allude to the apostle's expression in another case, is careful that all things be done in decent order and exactness. Hence, though, with regard to himself, every thing is ever present to his immutable counsel, omniscient eye, and almighty power; yet, with respect to the sons of men, he has fixed certain periods for the accomplishment of different events; has determined that one shall succeed another in a regular order and connection, so as that these events, if duly attended to, shall appear beautifully connected together, shall serve

serve strikingly to illustrate each other, and the whole, when combined, shall exhibit a most complete and glorious plan, in every respect worthy of its great Author, and every way sufficient to accomplish the important purposes for which it was drawn out and intended. This being unquestionable, it is clear that, in the plan of Providence, every event has a certain, a fixed period, at which it must actually make its appearance; and, had we a spiritual discernment, we would perceive that the period in which every event falls out, is the best and most proper season for its existence.

This is strikingly obvious in regard to the important event of which we now speak. There was doubtless a particular season fixed for it. If then we consider who fixed that period, and at the same time attend to the matter itself, we will have the fullest reason for pronouncing the period in which it fell out as the most proper for its existence. Without question this visit was made in the fulness of time.

All those events which had been foretold as to precede the coming of the Messiah, were previously accomplished. In particular, the sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet: For at that time the Jews were under the Roman yoke, and tributaries to Augustus Cæsar. The harbinger of the Messiah, in the person of John the Baptist, who was to prepare the way before him, and to announce his approach, had also made his appearance. And this we are expressly told was in its season. The mournful period had arrived, when, as an evidence of the immediate appearance of the Messenger of the covenant, who would act as a refiner and purifier of silver, and would have much occasion to exert himself in this capacity: We say, the mournful period had arrived, when persons were become so degenerate, and so deeply drenched

drenched in wickedness, as by their words and conduct blasphemously to say, as is stated, Malachi, iii. 14. "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" And hence, on these grounds, even in the order of succession, this event of necessity had to arise.

Besides, it is to be observed, that the time fixed in the eternal counsels in which this visit should be made, had now arrived; prophecy in a great measure, if not altogether, had ceased; the Old-Testament dispensation was now nearly brought to a period, and this was to be succeeded by a dispensation far more excellent and glorious; a dispensation which was to commence with this event, as the foundation of all the happiness and hope belonging to it. The types and shadows themselves were about to vanish; and therefore, that which was pointed out by them, must necessarily succeed in their room; for when that which was in part is done away, then that which is perfect must come. The period towards which the several prophecies and promises respecting the coming of the Messiah looked forwards, was arrived; and therefore it was proper, that the one should be fulfilled, and the other accomplished in this event.

The time limited for the almost universal dominion of the powers of darkness over this lower world, had expired; of course, their dominion must be overturned, their power must be withdrawn, their kingdom must be brought down; a wide and effectual door must be opened up for diffusing the glorious tidings of liberty and peace through the whole earth; and in order to this, the Son of man, whose office in particular it was to destroy the works of the devil, must be revealed. The wickedness of man was become truly great, profaneness and impiety.

piety seemed to be universal, and at an exceeding great height; while this evidently foretold, it rendered the immediate accomplishment of this event necessary.

Jehovah had employed various methods to reclaim and recover his backsliding people from the evil of their ways; he had made use both of judgments and mercies; he had sent one prophet after another among them, and all, in appearance, to little or no effect. He had therefore, if we may so express ourselves, only this last trial to make with respect to them, before he gave them up as finally irreclaimable; the sending his Son, that they might reverence him. Accordingly, having given up with prophecy, as now no longer of any use to them, this last means must be tried. The only begotten Son must leave the bosom of the Father, in order to his suffering for a guilty world, displaying the sceptre of mercy, and giving fair warning to a rebellious race, of impending rain. In short, when this visit actually was made, matters had come to such a crisis, so rapid progress had been made in the plan of Providence, this, together with the concurrence of other important considerations, renders it, in our view, beyond a doubt, that the appointed season was come; and that it was, in every sense of the expression, the fulness of time, when the Saviour should be manifested and sent forth.

10. This visit was, nay still is, of a very mysterious nature. For a considerable time, every thing in relation to it was of a mysterious nature, and required much spiritual discernment to comprehend or profit by it, as the whole was wrapt up under various types and figures, shadows and ceremonies, prophecies and promises; hence it is said to be the mystery hid from ages and generations. Even now that in these last days it has become manifest, the nature

nature of it in some sort more clearly ascertained, and its designed declared; yet still it must be considered as in a great measure mysterious. That there are mysteries belonging to it which finite wisdom can never comprehend, and which, through the ages of eternity, will not be fully unfolded, is unquestionable. The apostle has evidently this in his view, when he thus expresses himself, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh;" in effect declaring, that this visit was not merely a mystery, but even a great mystery. And this will appear obvious, if the matter is attentively considered. That ever this visit was proposed;—the manner in which it was to be brought about, and in which it was actually accomplished;—the events which occurred during its continuance,—and the effects produced by it; each and all of these, if duly observed, will serve to illustrate the apostle's assertion, and make it fully evident, that this visit was truly of a mysterious nature.

When man had offended God, his great Creator, had rebelled against him, and incurred his just displeasure, it need neither have amazed nor surprised us, though we had heard of his making bare his holy arm, and hurling his thunderbolts of vengeance unceasingly against the whole of the human race, till he had made a full end of us; in regard this was nothing more than what we deserved, nothing other than what in justice might have been expected: But that that God whom we had so highly offended, whose law we had so grievously trampled upon, that he should entertain a purpose of grace and good-will towards such base rebellious creatures; this indeed must be considered as truly astonishing and incomprehensible. There is such a mystery here, that finite minds, when contemplating it, of necessity must be lost in wonder, admiration,

admiration, and, if we may so express ourselves, in almost entire ignorance with respect to what is before them. It is doubtless altogether inconceivable, in any proper manner, by limited capacities, such as ours are, how God either could or would entertain such a purpose in behalf of persons so obnoxious to him. The law having been openly violated, the divine majesty having been highly offended, his holiness grossly insulted, his goodness awfully abused, his justice grievously incensed, his power most eminently despised, and his faithfulness in the most contemptible manner derided and set at nought, in these circumstances it was doubtless altogether impossible for angels or men to have devised how mercy could, with any propriety, be extended to such guilty criminals; and though they had been capable to have devised the possibility of such an event, yet they were altogether unable to have ascertained the probability of such a dispensation ever arising in their favour. It was certainly therefore a rich display of infinite wisdom, not only the making such an event possible, and consistent with his own glory; hence, in the language of inspiration, declared to be the manifold wisdom of God; but also it was doubtless a mystery of love and grace, the rendering it not only possible but probable, by adopting a gracious purpose to this effect. This was, this is such a mystery as we could never have had any conception of; and even now that it in part has been made manifest, still it is love that passeth all knowledge and comprehension.

This visit will appear still more mysterious in its nature, if we attend to the manner in which it was proposed to take effect; the channel through which this purpose of grace could only be of real benefit to the sons of men; and this was through the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. That
Jehovah

Jehovah should for a moment supersede the execution of deserved vengeance, is, doubtless, a display of long-suffering, patience, and forbearance; that he should take the smallest notice, or signify the least favourable regard for such hell-deserving creatures, must be viewed as a wonder of divine mercy: But that he should discover such earnestness, that he should express such concern about their recovery, that rather than it should not take effect, the eternal Son should veil his divine glory, and appear in the likeness of sinful flesh. This is a mystery which infinite wisdom can only unfold, which boundless grace could only exhibit, and which, through eternal ages, cannot be sufficiently admired.

Not only was this visit of a mysterious nature in respect of its being proposed, but also in regard of the manner in which it was actually accomplished. There were various circumstances which concurred to this. The period in which it was actually accomplished, renders it in some sort of a mysterious nature. Though it was in the fulness of time that this visit was made, yet it was at a season when few were looking for it, and, outward appearances considered, it could least of all have been expected. The wickedness of man was great, iniquity was awfully prevalent, and divine vengeance was eminently provoked. It was therefore truly amazing, that at such a juncture divine goodness and grace should be so illustriously displayed. The person who made this visit was also a mystery. Solomon, when dedicating the temple, cried out with amazement, Will God indeed dwell with man upon earth? while the heaven, even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? But much more amazed and astonished must we be, when it is considered that he condescended not only to dwell with man, but even in human nature; for the person
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who made this visit was and is not only God, and so incomprehensibly glorious in his nature and perfections, but also he was and is at the same time man; and these natures are so wonderfully united, as to constitute only one divine person. It doubtless was, as well as still is, a great mystery, how this could be; how the divine nature could have such intimate alliance with the human, and yet not be degraded below its essential dignity, how the human nature could be so inseparably united to the divine, and after all remain in the same humble sphere competent to humanity; how these two natures were capable of being combined together, and how, by their wonderful constitution, we are presented only with one divine person: these are mysteries far above the human ken, and which, with minuteness to investigate, would be the height of presumption.

The visit itself, even after it had commenced, was in some sort a mystery. The nature of it was but in part understood, and its design but imperfectly apprehended by any. The various events which occurred during its continuance, were also mysterious and important. The service and suffering which Christ rendered to law and justice, were in their nature eminently mysterious. That the Lawgiver should become a subject and servant to his own law; that he who challenges all things as his, should have no where to lay his head; that he who has the undoubted sovereignty over all creatures and things, should be at the controul of the most worthless of men; that the Lord of life should become a breathless corpse; that he who knew no sin, should become the chief of sinners; that he who was innocence itself, should become the devoted victim to incensed justice; that the best beloved of the Father should be dealt with as the object of his abhorrence; that the bowels

of divine mercy should be wholly restrained from him towards whom, if necessary, they might have been expected most eminently to abound; and that pure unmixed wrath should be poured out to him who from all eternity lay in the bosom of the Father: these are events which made their appearance during the continuance of this visit, and are certainly of a most mysterious nature; for, "when, " in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, " he was not only made of a woman, but also he " was made under the law; he made himself of no " reputation; he took upon him the form of a " servant; he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; " he was a man despised and rejected of men; " a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs;" the Lord hid his face from him, and the envenomed arrows of the Almighty pierced his soul. Besides all this, what striking displays of power, wisdom, grace, and condescension, did the glorious visitor afford while on earth, insomuch that the people wondered greatly, and said, We never saw it on this fashion, nay, it was never so seen in Israel. They were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power: never man spake like him.

In short, the blessed effects produced by it, abundantly declare this visit to be of a most mysterious important nature. To enumerate these fully is impossible, for they are past reckoning; it may suffice as a specimen to observe, that by this visit we have God actually reconciled to sinners, by whom his justice was most eminently provoked; sinners saved with an everlasting salvation, while their rebellion and their wickedness was unexampled; the just God justifying the ungodly; mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace harmonising in the gift of eternal life to those whose

just

just demerit was quite the reverse, through Jesus Christ, upon the footing of that covenant made with him: In short, the powers of darkness were foiled and vanquished when their strength was greatest, when they seemed altogether impregnable; and this in a way the most improbable to carnal sense and reason; but in which the superior wisdom and power of Jehovah was most eminently conspicuous.

11. This visit was, in one view, to the Jews only, and in another to all the world without distinction. This visit more immediately, and in the first instance, respected the Jewish church and nation: Hence Christ is said to be the glory of his people Israel, and to be the minister of circumcision for the truth. Accordingly, in the exercise of his public ministry, he confined himself chiefly among that people; and though he made some advances to the coast of the Gentiles, as an evidence that they were also the objects of his care, and as an earnest of what great things were in reserve for them; yet they, as a nation, were never favoured with his personal presence or ministrations. This was neither intended, nor, all circumstances considered, would it have been proper.

It was not intended. Hence Jesus uniformly avowed, that his commission, and the exercise of it in the first instance, only respected the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Thus, in his conference with the Syrophœnician woman, he expressed himself, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Though some few individuals of the Gentiles tasted of his goodness, and were privileged with the enjoyment of his personal ministrations, yet these were either so few as scarce to deserve the being particularly distinguished, or, perhaps, may with propriety be considered as belonging to and constituting what our Saviour points out

by the lost sheep of the house of Israel, being for the present members of that church.

And as it was not intended that this gracious visit should, in the first instance, respect the Gentiles; so the propriety of this dispensation, all circumstances considered, is obvious. The house of Israel were God's children; to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants; they were separated as his peculiar people, from among all the families of the earth: He had put his name among them, and therefore it was most fit that this visit should be made, and the riches of his grace displayed first before them: Though they had departed far from him; yet, as children, it was meet they should have the children's bread first presented to them. In agreeableness to which, we find our Saviour accounting thus for his behaviour towards the woman of Canaan. Matth. xv. 26. "It is not meet," said he, "to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." In effect intimating, that while the Gentiles were not, as yet, taken within the pale of God's visible church, but were considered as aliens and outcasts, there was neither propriety nor justice in their enjoying the privileges which were peculiar to children. Blessed be God, though in this view, and in the first instance, this visit respected the Jews only, and those few connected with them; yet, in another view, in its ultimate and more important design, it respected the whole world without distinction.

While the partition-wall stood betwixt Jews and Gentiles, the dispensations of divine mercy were in so far limited and circumscribed: but as Christ was given to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel; so, by this visit, more especially by his death, this partition-wall was struck down, the peculiar privileges were laid open, the Saviour's benign influences were extended

tended over all, and were to be diffused indiscriminately among Jews and Gentiles. Though the offers of his grace and goodness were first to be made at Jerusalem; yet if by their unbelief they should put the salvation of God from them, the Gentiles, as having an equal title to it, were instantly next to be addressed: Nay, the Saviour, in the fulness of his righteousness and merit, without exception or limitation of Jew or Gentile, was to be proclaimed among all people whatever. Hence, though at the first the disciples orders were limited, and they were enjoined not to go into the way of the Gentiles, yet their commission was afterwards enlarged, and rendered as extensive as possible. "Go ye," said Jesus to them, "unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark, xvi. 15. Hence also, what is stated by the apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, chap. ii. 11.—19. which may be consulted. — We observe,

In the *last* place, That this visit was of a short and transitory nature, but is productive of the most lasting effects, and is to be repeated with astonishing grace and glory at the last day. The period, during which Christ dwelt on earth, was at any rate of short continuance; and much more must this be admitted, if we confine our views to the time when he exercised his public ministry. But however short and transitory the visit was, yet it by no means is to be considered as useless or unimportant. It was not a visit which left no traces behind it, which was not attended with any good effects, and so soon as over might be forgot. No: by it the most important purposes were accomplished; though transitory in its nature, it was productive of the most lasting effects. By this visit was commenced a work which will only be completed when time shall be no more. By it are blessings purchased, which in their perfection can only

be enjoyed in an eternal world. There is hence opened up the most ample source of consolation to the saints and people of God in every succeeding period; and a solid foundation is laid for unceasing hallelujahs through the ages of eternity, their singing and saying, "To him that loved us, and
" washed us from our sins in his own blood, and
" hath made us kings and priests unto God and
" his Father, to him be glory and dominion for
" ever and ever. Amen."

But though this visit was short and transitory, it is not to be viewed as the concluding scene, the last instance of his kindness to the sons of men. By no means. The visit, of which we now speak, has indeed for some time been concluded, but Jesus has not taken a final farewell. His first visits are always earnest of future and farther manifestations: He never leaves his people, without assuring them, that he will see them again, and that their hearts shall be made to rejoice; their joy no man shall take from them. "I go," said Christ to his disciples, "but I will come again," or, as it may be rendered, I am coming again; in effect signifying, that his leaving them is not more certain than his return in due time will be; the one is as it were a prelude of and a commencement to the other. Hence, though that visit which Jehovah made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son, is over in the first instance, his design in this respect is far from being completed. The visit is to be renewed. Jesus is indeed for the present hid from mortal sight, and the heavens will retain him till the consummation of all things; but then he will appear: This visit will be repeated with astonishing grace and glory.

At the first he appeared but in a mean and in a low condition: He humbled himself; made himself of no reputation; took upon him the form of a servant; and became obedient unto death, even
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the death of the cross; even then he was full of grace and truth: But when he comes again, he will appear without sin unto salvation; he will come in his own glory, and the glory of his heavenly Father, with all the holy angels, attended with the redeemed from among men, for these will appear with him. He will then display the most astonishing grace and glory; for he will be glorified in his saints, admired in and by all them that believe. As to what that grace and glory will be with which the Redeemer shall then be encircled, finite minds can afford no distinct comprehension or expression, the day alone will declare it. One thing is most undoubted, that all this shall be; and therefore it is incumbent upon us, that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ; for as he that ascended was the same who descended, so his first visit is to be repeated with astonishing grace and glory at the last day.

Jesus, though gone, returns again

With kindness in his heart;

And when he comes, he'll still maintain

The kind Redeemer's part.

He will come again to receive his people to himself, to put them in possession of those mansions, of that kingdom and glory which he has prepared for them. Thus were the disciples comforted after his ascension, by two angels who appeared to them, and said, Acts, i. 11. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It was proposed;—

II. To

II. To consider the nature of that redemption which is here stated, as the glorious effect of the gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, made us in the incarnation of his eternal Son; — and, with respect to this, it is to be observed,

1. That it is a redemption from the curse of the law, and from the hell of God's wrath, which is consequential upon this curse. There is not an individual of the human kind but, considered as in Adam, their first root and covenant-head, they lie under a sentence of condemnation by the law. By our fall in him, all of us are separated from God; for all have sinned; and have come short of the glory of God. This is the first, and a principal branch of the curse of the law: Adam fell under it as soon as he sinned; the threatening was, dying, thou shalt die. And no sooner was it incurred than it took effect. — Spiritual death at once seized upon him: He was instantly in a state of alienation from God: He also was brought under all the other branches of the law's curse. The seeds of mortality were infused into his frame; and he was in a state of exposure to the wrath and vengeance of Almighty God, which is the second death. And as with Adam himself, so with all his posterity without exception: They, in respect both of their original and actual transgressions, are under the curse of the law in all its extent. "Curled is every one that continueth not in "all things that are written in the book of the law "to do them." Gal. iii. 10. We are without God, alienated from him by wicked works, and are children of wrath; for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. The curse of the law is what no one can set aside. The wrath of God is a burden too heavy for any to stand under: it is a fire which, when kindled, will burn to the lowest hell: It is that which truly and properly consti-

tutes hell. Who can stand before his indignation? What then can be more interesting to the sons of men, what inquiry more important, than this, "How shall I be saved?"

The least attention to the matter may soon convince us, that we cannot help ourselves; we can do nothing to avert divine indignation, or effect a reconciliation with God. But what we were incapable of, infinite wisdom, power, and grace, hath done for us. Jesus hath visited and redeemed his people; and that redemption which he hath accomplished, is specially a redemption from the curse of the law, and from the hell of God's wrath, which is consequential. This is expressly ascertained by the apostle. Says he, Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." He took upon himself the burden of our guilt, and suffered the vengeance due for our offences. Having had laid on him the iniquities of an elect world, divine justice considered him as the guilty person: Divine vengeance flamed forth in awful fury against him, and poured out its torrents till they were quite emptied; the storm beat with incessant violence upon him, till its strength was spent, and it had altogether subsided. He endured the wrath of God to the full; and hence, in regard to all those whom he represented, and for whom he acted, there can be no claim or quarrel stated: There is no condemnation to such; they are in no hazard of eternal vengeance. Divine justice cannot demand a double payment for the same debt, or inflict a double punishment for the same offence. Having taken up with the surety, and exacted upon him, of necessity there must be an acquittal in favour of all those for whom this was done. In respect to such, when viewing the services and sufferings which Jesus had yielded, Jehovah said, and still says, Fury is not
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in me. Does guilt then, my brethren, stare you in the face? Do the terrors of the Almighty stand in fearful array against you? Are you trembling on account of that wrath and vengeance to which you stand exposed, and which in justice you deserve to have executed against you? Fear not. Behold we bring you glad tidings: The Redeemer is come to Zion, and that redemption which he has accomplished, is in its nature a redemption from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God. The Redeemer is waiting that he may be gracious; he saves to the uttermost; he delivers from the wrath to come; he has delivered, he does deliver, and he will deliver. "Him that cometh unto him, he will" "in no wise cast out."

2. It is a redemption from the law as a covenant of works. This is expressly asserted by the apostle. Says he, Gal. iv. 4. 5. "When the fulness of time" "was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that" "were under the law." It is not only a redemption from the curse of the law, but also from the law as a covenant of works, in all the extent of the expression.

All by nature are subject to the law under this form. This is strikingly obvious from that universal attachment there is with all to seek after life by their own doings. But however much we may be attached to the law as a covenant of works, and to life in this way; yet if we seriously attend to what we are in our corrupt fallen estate, what the law indispensably requires of us, and subjects to, instead of having reason to pronounce this a desirable situation, we will soon perceive the most sufficient grounds for considering our condition in this view as most deplorable, and that deliverance from it is what we should earnestly seek after.

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The smallest deliberation upon the subject, it is presumed, will convince as to the justice of this observation: For not only is it to be recollected, that as many as are under the law, as a covenant of works, are under the curse, according to what is peremptorily stated by the apostle; but also, even though this was set aside, yet still there remains more than sufficient to influence our seeking after deliverance from it under this form. For if man, when in a state of uprightness and integrity, had but powers and abilities equal to such an undertaking, the yielding conformity to the extensive requirements of the law, so as, in consequence of this conformity being fully realized, to obtain life: and even though there were powers sufficient, failed in that undertaking: how unavailing, nay, how presumptuous and criminal must it be in weak, corrupt, fallen creatures, such as all now are, to propose such an attempt: in regard it is utterly impossible, that the obedience which they can render can ever be proportioned to the demands of that law, which requires an obedience universal and uninterrupted? and of course it must be chimerical to expect life in this way. Indeed one would think, that persons are either wholly ignorant of themselves, totally unacquainted with the nature of the divine law, or are altogether infatuated, who view such a proposal as practicable. It is truly amazing, that any should consider, that that which subserves to aggravate the misery of their situation, can in itself ever have a tendency to promote their happiness. Doubtless persons who attain to right apprehensions of themselves, and are suitably exercised, will be anxious to obtain deliverance from under the law, as a covenant of works. This, however, is what they cannot either accomplish for themselves, or insist upon to be done for them as a matter of just right. Having brought themselves under the law in

in this form, which they did in their first parents though they are now altogether incapable to yield an obedience to it, though it is utterly impossible that they can obtain life in this way; yet they can by no means disengage themselves from under its influence: They cannot insist upon being released from that obligation they are under to its precept and penalty. Though we have lost all ability for fulfilling what is incumbent upon us; yet it does not thence follow, that Jehovah has lost his authority, his right to command upon this footing, and to enforce obedience in this way: Without question he may still deal with us according to the tenour of this dispensation, and proceed against us in agreeableness to what the law, under this form, shall direct; and it must be entirely owing to his sovereign good pleasure that matters shall ever be otherwise in the experience of any.

Among the other blessings included in that redemption accomplished by Christ, this is a special, a leading one, deliverance from the law as a covenant of works. And in the nature of things this could not fail to be the case: For if Christ, when acting as the surety of a better testament, was made under the law, in this view of it, and hence was subject to the whole of those precepts and that penalty which it contained, so as perfectly to fulfil the one, and fully to endure the other; in these circumstances it is impossible that those whom he represented, and for whom he acted, could, so soon as actually interested in this redemption, be obnoxious either to the one or to the other. The apostle, in the passage above referred to, clearly states this to be the fact: With respect to some that were originally, and in justice, under the law as a covenant of works, he asserts, that Christ delivered them out of such an unhappy situation, and he did so by being made under the law, in this view, for them; standing,

standing, acting, and suffering in their room and place. The law's dealings with and upon Christ were so full and complete, that it has become exonerate, in respect to all those for whom he so acted; when redeemed it has no influence, even the smallest, upon them; they are neither subject to its precept nor penalty; and without this, the redemption of which we now speak could not have been accomplished in all the extent of the blessing. In this redemption then there is included freedom from the law as a covenant of works, so as that it can neither command, condemn, or punish those whom the Saviour actually has redeemed. Hence such are by the apostle represented as not under the law, but under grace; in effect signifying, that by being brought under the one, they had obtained a freedom from the other, in regard it was impossible they could be under subjection to both at once.

Before closing this observation, it is proper, for preventing mistakes, to intimate, that we must be entirely misconstrued, if, from what has been stated, we should be considered as asserting, that such as are interested in this redemption are delivered from all subjection to the law in every view whatever. This is a sentiment, a doctrine, which, while we avow what is stated above, we with the utmost abhorrence must reprobate. For though the objects of this blessing are delivered from the law as a covenant of works, yet they are still under it as a rule of life in the hand of Christ as Mediator; and, in this view, there is to be an equal, nay, if possible a greater care and solicitude exercised, as to the yielding an obedience to its requirements, as ever, our obligations to this being as strong, and even stronger than when life was to be had by the deeds of the law. — Thus we find the apostle argues, Rom. vi. 15. In the preceding verse he had stated, that, in respect to the believing Romans, they were
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not under the law, but under grace; and having done so, he immediately adds, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." In being under the law as a covenant of works, are we under no law, no restraint whatever? Shall we walk at random, and live as we list? God forbid: Let not such a thought once enter into your minds. This is entirely incompatible with your situation as creatures, and more especially as new creatures. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" The application is easy and obvious: "Being made free from sin," and from the law as a covenant, which is the strength of sin, ye became the servants of righteousness," to the law of righteousness in the hand of the Redeemer; and having "become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." "Do we make void the law by such doctrine?" says he, in another place, "By no means; we establish it." And hence, my brethren, it is observable, that those who are actually redeemed by the blood of Jesus, according to the exceeding riches of grace, who live and act under the influence of this privilege, instead of turning the grace of God to licentiousness, they, as zealously careful to maintain good works, distinguish themselves by holiness in all manner of life and conversation.

3. It is a redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan. To be under the power, the dominion of sin, to be slaves to Satan, and to be led captives by them at their will, is the mournful, the melancholy condition of all by nature, and this is a slavery, a bondage of the worst kind. What renders our condition still more deplorable is, that, insensible to our misery, we are disposed to hug our chains, and

and are evidently in love with our captivity. In that redemption, however, which Christ has accomplished, there is included enlargement from both these evils: By it persons are brought from under the power of sin and Satan, and are introduced to the glorious liberty of the children of God. It was one great end of Christ's manifestation, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and in particular this work of his, sin; hence he had this name given him, "Jesus, because he was to save his people from their sins." He was given, and gave himself, to redeem from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.—It was prophesied of him, "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence;" and this could not fail to be fulfilled. Thus we see that the redemption of which we now speak is a redemption from sin; and, it is to be observed, that it is at once a redemption from the guilt, the pollution, the dominion, and the in-being of sin.

It is a redemption from the guilt of sin, in regard it includes under it freedom from guilt, or, in other words, forgiveness of sins. Thus the apostle: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It is a redemption from the pollution of sin; for it is a redemption efficacious to the purging away this: Hence it is pointed out to be "a saving by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is also a redemption from the power, the dominion of sin; that bondage and subjection which by nature we are under, it is in this way broken, its dominion overturned; and therefore, though it may rage, it cannot any longer reign in these persons. Hence these expressions, "Sin shall not reign over your mortal bodies.—Sin shall not have dominion over you.—Ye are not under the law, but under grace.—Being made free from sin,"

"ye become servants unto God. — The law of the
 "spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, hath made
 "me free from the law of sin and death." In one
 word, though, while in this imperfect state, this
 freedom can be but partial and incomplete; though
 there may still be found, even in the best, some re-
 mains of sin dwelling in them, this will not always
 be their situation; in due time there will be an en-
 tire deliverance from this evil experienced. The
 work of sanctification shall at length fully be comple-
 ted; for this redemption includes under it an aboli-
 tion of the very being of sin in due time; so as that
 neither as to its consequences, nor as to itself, shall it
 have any real existence in those who are interested
 in this redemption. With all such it shall not have
 the smallest part or place in them.

But as it is a redemption from sin; so also from
 Satan. While Christ came to destroy the works of
 the devil, and to deliver from them, he also came
 to destroy the devil himself, and to deliver from
 under his power: Hence, he is said to have destroy-
 ed death, and him that had the power of death,
 that is, the devil. He bound the strong man, and
 spoiled him of his goods; and having done so, all
 those who are interested in this blessing of redemp-
 tion, through and by it, are brought from under
 the power of Satan, are no longer his slaves and
 vassals, but are free men in Christ Jesus. They are
 not indeed all at once taken wholly from under his
 power. Though, when redeemed, they are not the
 children of disobedience, in whom the prince of the
 power of the air reigneth, his dominion in and over
 them being overturned; yet for a time he is suffer-
 ed to prevail in so far over them, to disturb and to
 distress them. At length, however, they shall be
 wholly freed from this enemy, and taken entirely
 from under his influence: For the assurance is,
 "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your
 "feet

“ feel shortly.” Does sin then, my brethren, distress you, either in its guilt, in its pollution, in its dominion, or in being? Does Satan distract and disturb you? Seek an interest in this redemption; and this obtained, you may assure yourselves of complete deliverance from all your distresses in due time: Jehovah Jesus shall without fail redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

4. It is a redemption from the world, its allurements and entanglements. Redemption from the world, may some say, take this from us, and what else valuable do you leave us? Deprive us of those profits and pleasures we enjoy, and then, indeed, you render us comfortless. If this be religion, we wish to remain for ever strangers to it. If you have no other offer to make us, we must still continue in the same miserable state in which you suppose us to be, and shall reckon ourselves happier than such a change can possibly make us. If this be the nature of that redemption which has been accomplished, we neither desire the knowledge of the Redeemer's name, nor have we any employment to give him. But, my brethren, however much this may be the unhappy views and language of too many; yet with those who are possessed of a spiritual discernment, redemption from the world should, and will be, considered as a most invaluable blessing.

There is no greater enemy to religion than the profits, the pleasures, and the honours of a present life. Wherever this world predominates in the heart, the love of the Father cannot be in that person. Hence we find those who are children of disobedience, are particularly characterized from their walking according to the course of this world, as being subject to its influence, as conforming themselves to its customs and fashions. The world, where it obtains the ascendancy, fetters and enslaves persons to such a degree, that they find it difficult,

may, impossible to disentangle themselves from under its influence: such power has it over them, that it prevails with them to engage in practices, to follow courses which in themselves are truly sinful; but which, being sanctioned by the world's powerful nod, and confirmed by custom and fashion, their propriety is never once called in question. With too many, whatever is in fashion must be right. This gives a sufficient warrant for, and stamps propriety enough upon any part of conduct, however ridiculous and sinful otherwise it may be: For the maxim with such is, Better be out of the world, than out of the fashion; nay, such influence has the world, and the things of the world over persons, that, instead of being in a subserviency to, and under the controul of more important concerns, as undoubtedly should be; on the contrary, every other interest must too often be subject to, and regulated by its absurd and arbitrary orders. And, my brethren, when we consider, that the world co-operates with sin and Satan, in opposition to the glory of God, and the advancement of our eternal welfare, doubtless it will be allowed, that this is an evil of which we had need to beware, an enemy from under whose influence we should be anxious to obtain deliverance. All are by nature under subjection to this world, as being under bondage to him who is the God of it; and, though this be, yet from this state no one can bring themselves. But as Christ gave himself to redeem from iniquity, and to turn from Satan, so also in order to deliver from this present evil world. Thus the apostle, Gal. i. 4. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

The redemption of which we now speak, is therefore a redemption from this world. All such as are actually interested in it are in, but not of this world;

world; they are not under subjection to the world in its corrupt customs and fashions. With respect to them, the snare is broken, and they are escaped: For "whosoever is born of God, "overcometh the world; and this is the victory "that overcometh the world, even our faith." There is not a taking out of the world, when this is realized, but only a keeping from the evil that is in it. The world is crucified to such, and they to the world: Its allurements are made to lose that power and influence they once had over them: Its entanglements have little or no effect upon them; and all this is brought about by the cross of Christ, —is the glorious effect of that gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, made us in the person of the eternal Son. From an acquaintance with wisdom's ways, which have become to them ways of pleasantness, they have been made to despise those sinful and delusive pleasures which the world, and the things of the world, propose to them; as being brought plainly to perceive, that though they may taste sweet in the surface, yet at bottom they are nothing other than bitterness, gall, and worm-wood. Those things which before they counted gain, yet now they are convinced to be nothing other than loss; that, instead of its being profitable, it would be an irreparable loss, though they should gain the whole world, were it possible, if, after all, they lose their souls. In short, as being delivered from the delusive enchantments with which they were once held, they are convinced, that all the profits and honours which this world can afford, are not once to be laid in the balance with those riches and that honour which cometh from God. And hence, under the influence of the Spirit and grace of God, they are redeemed from a vain conversation, and are found earnestly coveting the best things.

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world; they are not under obligation to the world in its customs, culture and fashion. With respect to the world, they are not to be overcome; but the victory is theirs, and this is the victory. That, overcome the world, even our last. There is no more to be said, when this is realized, but only a looking from the evil that is in the world to the good that is in it. **LUKE, i. 68.**

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

HAVING already considered this redemption as comprehending under it freedom from the curse of the law; from the law as a covenant of works; in all the extent of the expression; freedom from sin and Satan; from the world, its vain allurements, and various entanglements; in order still farther to illustrate the nature of this blessing, we have yet to observe,—

That it is a redemption from self. Strange, may some one say, what do you now mean! To disengage us from self; to take us from a proper consideration of our own interests, as a first and chief concern; this certainly is not a kindness, but quite the reverse. But, my brethren, however much this may be the language of too many, nothing is more certain, than that we cannot be in a more distressful and deplorable situation, than when we are under the government of self, as a ruling principle; for when thus circumstanced, we must be acting in contradiction both to duty and interest; and we cannot ever be in the right way that leads to the city of habitation, but when we are delivered from under the influence of this evil. An evil most certainly it is, and this in an eminent degree.

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It lies at the source of all the evils, both moral and penal, that have been introduced into the world. Whence was it that Adam offended, and so, with all his posterity, fell from that holy and happy estate in which he was created? Why, this evidently proceeded from the prevalence of this evil, his preferring self to a much more important consideration: Instead of being governed by a due regard to the glory of God, which was a first and a chief concern, he gave himself up to the controul of this corrupt principle, and so ruined himself, with all his posterity. And as sin thus entered, as Satan thus triumphed in the beginning, matters still continue to operate in the same way.

Almost every evil that prevails, if impartially attended to, may be traced up to this radical evil, as in some sort, if not in a very striking manner, influencing it. For the corruptions both in the heart and life too often originate from self, in one view or other; either a regard for self-interest, self-honour, self-ease, or some other self gratification; and when it does so, it always holds the chief place, and must not be controuled. But while this is the situation of matters with any, it is evident that such are and must be most miserable. They thus make God their enemy, their adversary; for they rob him of that glory which is his due; they set themselves in opposition against him; nay, they upon the matter commence his rival; and what may seem still more extraordinary, by this conduct, instead of promoting, they counteract their best interests: For these can only be effectually consulted, when a due regard is had, in the first place, to the glory of God; and what relates to self, is only made a secondary subservient object of consideration. Hence it is observable, that in coming to Christ for life, in coming after him, it is required of all that, they have matters rectified in this instance,

france, that self may not be found prevailing in and over them: For Christ will neither allow self the chief room, nor will he submit to it as a rival with him in the heart. Self then is an evil, which, while it prevails in and over all by nature, is what must be dislodged, if, in the experience of any, they are found glorifying God, or are made partakers of any saving blessing. But how is this to be effected: With creatures it is unavailing to propose it; such a fast hold does it take, such an ascendancy has it over them, that they, if left to themselves, will never attempt it; and though they would, they have not ability for the work.

How comfortable is it to reflect, that what we could not do what was indispensably necessary to be done, Jesus, in that redemption which he accomplished, has done for us. This is one of the works of the devil which he has destroyed. By the efficacy of his service and sufferings, he has procured for us this blessing; and by his Spirit and grace he produces it in persons, redemption from self. Hence the apostle: "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." It is no trifling affair to have this brought about; but in a day of power this is effected; when the person is brought down from all his towering heights, from under the influence of this aspiring principle, and is made willing to be an eternal debtor to the exceeding riches of that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ. And it is to be observed, that the more that persons live by faith upon Jesus Christ,

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and are made to experience the efficacy of that redemption which is through him; the farther will they be removed from this evil, the more lowly, humble, and heavenly, will they be in their temper and deportment.

6. It is a redemption from all the evil of sufferings, from death and the grave; and in one word, from every evil and enemy whatever. We mean not here to insinuate, that by this redemption, all such as are interested in it shall obtain an entire exemption from trouble and trials. So far from this, on the contrary it must be admitted, that affliction is the common lot of God's children. If we endure not chastening, says the apostle, then are we bastards and not sons; for it is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom. But though there be not an exemption from sufferings, yet by this redemption they are delivered from all that is evil, wrathful, or penal in them. Such shall not be injured by all the troubles and trials they may have measured out to them; these shall rather prove salutary, medicinal, and profitable. The redeemed shall come out of every furnace improved and invigorated, or, according to Scripture expression, as gold seven times purified, and hence brighter and more serviceable than ever. And doubtless thus it must be: for the cup of wrath being put into the Redeemer's hands, he wrung out the bitter dregs of that cup; he did not leave the smallest drop of it; and hence there is none of it can ever reach those who are under the covert of his blood, for whom he acted when it was shed. Though there may be a necessity that these should be in the furnace, and even severely held; yet there is not the smallest drop of vindictive displeasure in the visitation: their crosses are comforts in disguise; for from the moment he blesses any, by bringing them under the influence of this redemption,

redemption, giving them an actual interest in it; from that moment his blessing is for ever upon them, there can no evil whatever befall them: Hence the promise to such is, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, he shall preserve thy soul."

But as this redemption is in its nature a deliverance from all the evil of sufferings for the present, so also from death and the grave; and in one word, from every evil, from every enemy whatever. Death is the king of terrors, and the terror of kings. It is the last enemy which the Christian has to encounter, and it is none of those which he has the least dread of. The most hardy are ready to be intimidated at the approach of the pale tyrant: Nature shrinks at the prospect of dissolution; even those who have most habituated themselves to the trying scene, when it arrives, if they are left alone their utmost efforts to support under it will be feeble and unavailing. The grave, that house of silence, abstractly considered, has something dreary and forbidding in its aspect; and to look forward to it as what is immediately to be our portion, is ready to fill the mind with gloomy apprehensions, which those possessed of the greatest natural fortitude are unable altogether to suppress. But though thus it may be with the wicked and ungodly, yet it is quite otherwise with the redeemed from among men: They indeed have to grapple with these enemies, and may sometimes feel a partial temporary uneasiness in the conflict; but like their glorious Captain, they come off the field victorious; for in that redemption he accomplished, he brought down the strength of these enemies, and made them an easy prey to his followers. The apostle declares the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death: and this shall be, nay is in part already done; for Christ, in working out this redemption, destroyed death, and him

him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. This was in express conformity to his undertaking, as we have it stated by the prophet, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." Well, thus did the Redeemer exert himself; he disarmed death of his sting; he stript him of his power; and by the greatness of his wisdom and strength, converted the curse into a blessing; transformed the furious vindictive adversary into a kind and condescending friend; who, though of an unsightly aspect, and sometimes may be rough in his treatment, yet in safety conveys the redeemed to the wealthy place. And as Christ delivers from death, so also from the grave: He delivers from the gloom and terror which otherwise would belong to it: He himself for a season entered within it, so as to reconcile his followers to that lonely dwelling: He perfumed it for them: and hence it is not to them a sad and solitary residence, but a bed of rest, in which they quietly repose themselves; their bodies as well as their souls remaining united to Christ till the resurrection.

In short, this is a redemption from every evil and enemy whatever: It is not a partial but a complete redemption that Christ has accomplished for his people: He in no instance leaves them in thralldom, or does he suffer them to be in bondage to any, but in due time brings them from under the power of every evil and every enemy whatever. "The troubles that afflict the just are many, but the Lord delivereth out of them all:—He delivers from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisom pestilence." Though he cause men to ride over their heads, though he make them to pass through fire and through water, yet he conducts

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safely through the whole, and at length brings to the wealthy place.

7. It is a redemption to God, and to the enjoyment of all good in and with him. We have as yet considered this redemption only as a negative blessing, including under it freedom from every evil, and deliverance from under the power of every enemy. We would however render but a very imperfect account as to the nature of this blessing, if we extend our views no farther in relation to it. This redemption includes under it not only freedom from every evil, but also a being in due time put into the possession of every blessing. While it points out deliverance from under the power of every enemy, it also brings us to God, and to the enjoyment of all good in and with him; the one naturally and necessarily follows upon the other, and the whole together serves to constitute the comprehensive nature of the blessing. This redemption would not have been that desirable, that invaluable blessing it is, or would the eternal purpose with respect to it have been rendered effectual, had matters been otherwise; had it been merely a redemption which was only subservient to deliver from every evil and every enemy, and not also efficacious to the enjoyment of all saving and spiritual blessings. As this was indispensably necessary, so it is actually realised. Jesus the just suffered for the unjust, that he might bring such to God. In that redemption which he hath accomplished, this is the glorious issue, the grand point to which it tends. Thus the apostle: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us
" to God by thy blood."

This includes much under it, extends to the enjoyment of every blessing that we can reasonably wish for, or should seek after. It comprehends under it restoration to the divine favour and friendship. By our sin we had forfeited the divine favour,

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vour, and had incurred his righteous hatred and displeasure, which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. By this redemption, sin, the cause of distance and displeasure, is not only done away, but also we are again brought into a state of favour and friendship with God. This the apostle avers: "But now in Christ Jesus," says he, "ye who sometimes were far off, are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ." Such as are interested in this redemption have God at peace with them, and they are at peace with him; they have ready access to him, and meet with the most gracious welcome, the most cordial acceptance with and from him. Hence the apostle: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand." "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." By this redemption we are enlightened in the knowledge of God, and have his image restored to and renewed upon us; the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is only to be had in and from the face of Christ Jesus; it is the only begotten Son who, as the great Prophet, can declare the Father to the sons of men; and this he both has done and will do. Christ gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; Tit. ii. 14. that he might bring us to God, and to conformity to his image, by bringing us back to the life of God, to the love of God, and to the service of God; thus creating us in righteousness and true holiness.

Union to and communion with a three-one God in Christ, are also capital ingredients in this blessing. In virtue of it, persons are joined to the Lord, and become one spirit with him; Christ is formed in their souls, the hope of glory; the Spirit of Christ dwells in them: such are made to abide

in the doctrine of Christ, and so have both the Father and the Son; and as they are united to the Father, to the Son, and to the ever-blessed Spirit, they in consequence are blessed with the enjoyment of the most intimate communion with them; and this in the commencement, the progress, and perfection of the privilege. Thus the apostle: "Truly," says he, "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This is a privilege which, as forfeited by our apostacy in Adam, could never have again been matter of experience with any, unless in the way of their being redeemed to the enjoyment of it. But this having been done, those in whose favour it was so, have it most firmly secured, as what is or shall be their undoubted privilege. The redeemed to God are not only recovered from the misery, the wretchedness of slaves; they are also introduced to the glorious state, and have an indefeasible right to the superabundant privileges of children of God. Such receive the adoption of sons; and if sons, then heirs of God with and through Christ. Time would fail, nay, it is impossible either to conceive or represent at large the various blessings, to the enjoyment of which this redemption for the present, and in due time, brings us. Eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which the Lord hath prepared of his goodness for them that love him, and are the called, according to his purpose. Temporal enjoyments, so far as these shall be necessary and beneficial to them, are theirs: Eternal life, with all saving and spiritual blessings, are theirs. Says Jesus, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly. I give unto them eternal life." To sum all up in one word, they have Jehovah as their portion; and in and with him they enjoy all things. Hence the promise to such is,

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“ I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I
 “ will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

8. It is a redemption by price. In cases of this kind among men where a captive is enlarged, unless the blessing is conferred freely, or obtained by force, it is necessary and usual that a ransom be given, as laying the foundation for such a privilege ; and the more valuable the captive, the higher in proportion will be the price of his release. Well, thus also it is in the present instance ; as the blessing could not be conferred altogether freely, as it was impossible that it could be produced by force, it was absolutely necessary to its being enjoyed, that it should be purchased ; without this it could never have been realised in the experience of any.

It is clear, that the captive sinner being by sin under bondage to law and justice, his enlargement could not be obtained in the way of no respect being had to the several claims which these had against him, without satisfaction being given, and reparation made for the offences, the injuries he had committed. The Judge of all the earth must do right. He will, he can by no means clear the guilty : Of course this blessing cannot be considered as what may be conferred freely, unless we were to imagine it possible that God, in order to display the riches of his mercy, would sacrifice all due regard to the claims of his holiness, justice, and faithfulness, as well as the honour of the divine law, which to suppose would be most blasphemous ; for a God all mercy would be a God unjust, in other words, would not be God : If you take from him the essential rectitude of his nature, his holiness and hatred of sin, you in effect, as far as in your power, if we may thus express ourselves, undeify him.

As this blessing could not be conferred freely, so neither could it be obtained by force. It was alto-

gether impossible for any creature to wrest the captive out of the hands of divine justice. The Almighty arm which held the sinner, was too powerful for any to overcome. The chains with which he was bound, were too strong for any to cut asunder. He therefore must have remained for ever in captivity, had not some other method been devised by which he might be set at liberty. "God was gracious, and said, Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." Seeing this redemption could not otherwise be accomplished as in other cases, so here a ransom was paid down, and one to a very high extent. The ransom was blood; for without the shedding of blood there could be no remission; but neither the blood of bulls nor of goats would be accepted of, as sufficient for the purpose; nothing less was required than the precious blood of Christ, and this was accordingly rendered. Thus the apostle: "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Such was the ransom demanded; a costly ransom indeed. But however costly, it was freely rendered. God the Father spared not his own Son, but readily delivered him up to the death for us all. Christ spared not himself, but with the greatest cheerfulness yielded himself up to the hands of justice for our sins. He said, "Lo, I come;" and when he came, he paid the last farthing of the debt; he suffered to the uttermost, that he might save to the uttermost: By his own blood he entered into the holy place once for all, having, by the shedding of it, obtained eternal redemption for us.

Thus it is that we are redeemed, such the price paid down. And it is to be observed, that there occurs a remarkable difference betwixt this redemption and

and every other thing of the same name. In other cases a commutation is admitted of; and thus the matter at times is easily accommodated. But in this instance, no such thing is allowed of: Nothing can be accepted of in exchange for this bondage; it must be endured either by the slave or his substitute; and you will also observe, that in other cases when a commutation takes place, and a price is to be paid down, the price usually rises or falls in proportion to the worth of the captive; but no such thing takes place here. On the contrary, in this instance, if there was any regard had to its objects, it would be quite the reverse as in other cases, the greatest ransom would be rendered for the most worthless wretch: But with all, there is not the smallest respect had to any thing in the creature. While the ransom rendered was in its nature a suffering all that bondage and slavery which the sinner had to endure, a yielding that conformity to the law which was required, the whole was done with the express design of displaying the exceeding riches of divine grace in his kindness towards the chief of sinners through Christ Jesus; as may afterwards more particularly be stated.

9. It is a redemption by power. In cases of this kind among men, when the price is paid down, and the person's release is executed, there is seldom or ever occasion for any thing more being done, than announcing the happy tidings to the captive, in order to his enjoying his liberty: But alas, with the sinner, though the price of his redemption be fully paid down, and his release in the most ample manner has been executed, yet, were the matter to go no farther, no such blessing would ever be enjoyed in the experience of any. To bring matters this length, it was by no means sufficient that the price was paid down, and our release from law and justice executed. There were others who held us captive;

captive; and though these had no right to detain us after law and justice were satisfied, yet they would nevertheless have domineered over us, and held us in bondage, had we not been wrested out of their hands. Well, as Christ paid down the price of our redemption, he also at the same time delivered us out of the hands of our enemies; and he did so by his own power: he entered the lists with them, and he entirely discomfited them: When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive; those who had made sinners captive, were in their turn made captives by the glorious Redeemer, and of course all under their influence became at his disposal: Hence it is said, He took the prey from the mighty, and he delivered the captive from the terrible one; he bound the strong man, and spoiled him of his goods. He thus accomplished our deliverance.

In these circumstances might it not have been supposed, that redemption was at length fully completed, and that liberty would in consequence have been actually enjoyed? But, my brethren, this was far from being the fact. In order to the experience of this blessing, not only must the ransom be paid, the enemies hold of us broken, and we wrested out of their power; but also, the ties, the attachment we have to them must be dissolved: Our agreement with hell must be broken, our covenant with death must be disannulled; and without this be done, every thing else which has been done, would be unavailing. This is clearly established from observation and experience.—That redemption which Christ hath purchased, and for which he has paid down the full price; that ample release from law and justice, in behalf of guilty sinners, which he hath obtained, is exhibited in a gospel-dispensation, unre-servedly to every sinner; and though all have the most absolute need of it, though there is the fullest, the most explicit welcome afforded, yet do any readily

dily embrace it? By no means. Quite the reverse! While left to ourselves, we reject his counsel; we will have none of his reproof; we will not come to the Redeemer, that we may have life and liberty. And whence is it that this is the case? Why, we are so much in love with sin; Satan has such dominion over us; the world has so bewitched and entangled us; and the law, in its covenant form, has so much room in the heart, such influence with us, that of ourselves we neither can nor will embrace that invaluable blessing of liberty, however freely and fully it may be proposed to us. Divine power must be displayed when we are brought forward to this, so as that these snares and entanglements with which we are held, may be broken, and we escape.

Well, as this was indispensably necessary, so it is a special part of that redemption accomplished by Christ. As it is a redemption by price, so also by power. The one has been fully paid down, the other is firmly secured. Hence, what is expressed by the Psalmist, Ps. cx. 2. 3.: "The Lord shall send the
"rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in
"the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be
"willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties
"of holiness from the womb of the morning:
"thou hast the dew of thy youth." The glorious Redeemer, in the day of his power, rides forth in his chariot of salvation, makes use of the gospel as an instrument in his hand, impregnates the word with divine efficacy, so as that it becomes the power of God, and the wisdom of God to salvation; in other words, is effectual to bring from under those entanglements with which persons are held, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan unto God. "The law of the spirit
"of life, which is in Christ Jesus, makes free from
"the law of sin and death." Thus this redemption is by power; and all who are brought under
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the influence of it, will readily join issue with what is expressed by Nehemiah, as fully verified in their experience. "Now, these are thy servants, and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power and thy strong hand."

10. In respect to the objects of this redemption, in one view, it is most enlarged and extensive, in another view, it is special, limited, and circumscribed. This redemption, as to its objects, is most enlarged and extensive, in regard it comprehends under it, some out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people; and it is not merely a few of those that shall be thus highly favoured, but a great multitude, such as no man can number; ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, according to what is stated by the Apostle John. In this view, therefore, it is a redemption which is most extensive and enlarged; and yet notwithstanding, in another view, it is special, limited, and circumscribed.

All are not thus privileged. Though it is a blessing which comprehends under it every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people; yet it by no means extends to the whole of them; it is only some out of each of those who are, or shall be thus favoured. Hence, such are said to be redeemed *from* among men, to be redeemed *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people. Which expressions certainly point out a particularity, a speciality in the objects upon whom this blessing, in its efficacy, terminates; for, were not this the case, the matter would not have been represented in terms so limited and circumscribed. Were the whole of mankind under the influence of this redemption, did it extend to all in every kindred, tongue, nation, and people, surely this would have been explicitly ascertained; and, instead of such expressions as the preceding, we would have had the following,

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or such like: The redeemed sons of men, the redeemed kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people. Doubtless there was no occasion for, or propriety in distinguishing some as thus favoured, if all were intended, if the whole ought to have been included.

But the fact is quite the reverse of this; and therefore the expression is exactly corresponding, and evidently conveys to us this idea, that of the human-kind some are taken, while others are left; that though God's gracious purpose and kindness extends to every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people, yet not to all, or even the greater part of them. Some are redeemed, while others are suffered to perish in that state of sinfulness and misery into which they have brought themselves. To this agrees the whole current of Scripture. Heaven's favourites are not the undistinguished herd of mankind; they are indeed taken from among these; at the same time they are a happy few, who are chosen and set apart by God for himself; and hence they are represented under particular discriminating characters, as being the special objects of the divine favour, as being under the particular care and cognisance of his providence. They are marked out as *his chosen*,—*his servants*,—*his seed*,—*his sheep*,—*his witnesses*,—*as in the world, but not of it*,—*chosen out of it, as a peculiar people*; and, as in our text, *his people*. All which, with other expressions of the like nature and import, denote a speciality in their character and privileges, which by no means is common to all, but peculiar to themselves.

It does not serve to invalidate what has been now stated. The enlarged tenour of expression, in respect to the redemption and salvation of sinners, which sometimes occurs in Scripture, such as the following: "God so loved the world, that he gave

" his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth

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“ on him should not perish, but have eternal life.—
 “ As by one man’s disobedience many were made
 “ sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many
 “ be made righteous.—Christ hath tasted of death
 “ for every man.—He spared not his own Son,
 “ but delivered him up for us all.—And, He is
 “ the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours
 “ only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

We are not to understand these, or the like expressions, as to be taken in their full latitude, but as specially limited in the context, or from the scope and design of the places. Thus, for instance, the world, and the whole world, in some places, is to be considered as pointing out the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews, as referring to some out of those who are comprehended under the happy influence of this blessing, which the Jews were disposed to confine wholly to themselves. In like manner, when this redemption is said to extend to all and every one, this is not to be explained as pointing out an all universally collective, in respect to all of all sorts, but either as distributive for some of all sorts, or collective, with a restriction to all of some sorts. This will appear evident, if these, or the like places are impartially reviewed. Instead of deriving from them the commonness, the universality of this privilege, so far from finding them to militate against the speciality, the peculiar nature of the blessing, they will rather serve to confirm and establish it. For though many are called, yet few are chosen.

11. This redemption, in its nature and egress, is absolutely sovereign, and divinely free. Though it is a blessing which is specially limited, and which has been, or can be conferred only upon a happy few, even those for whom it was designed and accomplished; yet we are not from thence to imagine, that those were such as in themselves, or by any thing which they had done, or could do, deserved

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it, or that God was, in any respect, necessarily obliged to extend this favour to them in preference to the rest of mankind. Divine sovereignty is nowhere more conspicuous than in the contrivance, the purchase, and application of this redemption. Man, by his apostacy from God, having plunged himself into an abyss of wretchedness, having become a captive to law and justice, to sin and Satan, God was under no obligation to make any provision for his recovery thence. He justly might have suffered the whole human race to perish in that estate, and glorified his great name by inflicting deserved judgment upon them. That therefore he took pity upon, and purposed the recovery of a select number, must be considered as an unquestionable display of divine sovereignty. Certainly no reason can be assigned for this part of the divine conduct, other than this, that so it seemed good in his sight.

This will appear the more evident, if we recollect that he altogether passed by the angels who fell, reserved them in chains, to the blackness of darkness for ever; while he compassionated our rebellious race, though less deserving of notice, though on account of their evil conduct, if possible, more obnoxious to his vengeance. Besides, divine sovereignty still farther appears in his fixing his love upon a certain number of our ruined race, while he passed by others; and in doing so, it is evident he had not the smallest respect either to the present or future worthiness of the persons upon whom his love did terminate. On the contrary, those who confessedly were the most worthless and wretched, were often pitched upon, while those less liable to exception in human reckoning, were suffered to perish; and all in order that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.

Besides, divine sovereignty is strikingly manifested

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not only in the purpose concerning this redemption, and in the objects to whom it was to be conferred, but also in the plan and method through which it was proposed, and in which it was accomplished. God might in justice have demanded satisfaction and obedience from the sinner, and if this could not be obtained, have refused to admit of a surety to do that for us which we could not do for ourselves. But he not only admitted of and accepted a surety with this view, he also himself even provided that surety, one fully qualified for the work, in every respect disposed to undertake it; and this no less a person than the eternal Son of the eternal Father, the second person of the glorious Godhead. When Jehovah said, Mercy shall be built up for ever, he with this view, and to this end, laid help upon one that was mighty; he raised up a chosen One from among the people, even David his servant, whom he anointed with his holy oil; and the Redeemer as readily engaged in the work, and with the utmost punctuality executed it: He said, Lo, I come; he bowed the head, he gave up the ghost, and he said, It is finished. But what possibly could influence to all this other than divine sovereignty? certainly nothing else; the more so, when we consider at what great expence all this was brought about: The eternal Son must leave the bosom of the Father, veil his divine glory, assume human nature, dwell for a season amongst us, appear in the form of a servant, be made under the law, endure the most painful and ignominious sufferings, and at length become obedient to death, even the death of the cross: In recompence for all this, what had he, or could he have from creatures? nothing but what was previously his due, apart from all the kindness he had thus shewed them, the good he had thus done them. Such being the fact, doubtless it must be admitted, that

that divine sovereignty appears conspicuous in this his procedure towards the sons of men.

Still farther it is to be observed, that divine sovereignty shines forth no less remarkably in the application of the blessing, than in its purpose and purchase; for it is not only a redemption by price, but also by power: Though every thing on the part of the Redeemer as to purchase was finished, though there remained nothing but the taking possession of, and so experiencing the benefit of the blessing by the happy persons for whom it was intended; yet, as we have before said, all former pains would have been ineffectual had nothing more been done for us; for though in absolute need of this help, we are both unable and unwilling of ourselves to embrace and improve it. Divine power must therefore be exerted, and divine sovereignty displayed, to bring down the natural pride, the legal bias of the heart, to divorce us from our lusts and idols, to conquer the unwarrantable prejudices and enmity we entertain against the grace and work of the Redeemer, to infuse life and strength, and thus sweetly, though irresistibly constrain us to yield the obedience of faith to the calls of his grace; determine, as well as enable us in improving the glorious Redeemer, as made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption.

In short, if we trace this matter with the most minute exactness, from its commencement in the eternal counsels, to its final consummation in heaven at the last day, we will find, that divine sovereignty marks and ennoble every part of its progress; that the exceeding riches of grace reigns through righteousness, in every period of blessing, from election to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus the apostle, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is

“the gift of God.” And again, “In whom we
 “have redemption through his blood, even the for-
 “givenness of sins.” If it should be inquired, How is
 it that all this proceeds? He informs us, that it is
 “according to the good pleasure of his will, to the
 “praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath
 “made us accepted in the beloved.”

In the *last* place, It is eternal redemption. This, if we may so express ourselves, completes the description of the blessing, and gives an additional importance to all that has before been observed in relation to it. All blessings of this kind among men are precarious and uncertain: Though enjoyed for a season, we soon may be deprived of them, and again reduced to that state from whence we were but lately delivered. But this by no means can ever be the case in the present instance. Such as are interested in this blessing can never forfeit their title to it; when once enjoyed by persons, they cannot ever afterwards, on any account whatever, be deprived of it. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. It is not merely a temporal deliverance, and so of a temporary nature, what can only be enjoyed for a season: No: It is a spiritual blessing, and so of a durable nature, of an everlasting continuance. It includes under it eternal life. And hence, though we have some foretastes afforded while in this vale of tears, the perfection of the blessing is reserved for another world, when we shall be ever with the Lord. It is thence represented, by the apostle to the Hebrews, as an eternal salvation, an eternal redemption. Says he, “Christ being made perfect, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” “By his own blood he entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

S E R M O N IX

LUKE, K. 68.

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited
and redeemed his people.*

HAVING offered several observations concern-
ing the gracious visit here mentioned, and
considered the nature of the redemption following
upon it, we now proceed, as was proposed,

III. To confirm the truth of the proposition.

As the proposition is complex, and consists of two
parts, into which it may be resolved, that a clearer
and more distinct illustration may be rendered, we
shall attend to those parts separately; and so,

1st. We shall attempt to instruct, that the graci-
ous visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath
made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son,
with the redemption accomplished by it, affords the
highest grounds for praise and thanksgiving.—And
then,

2^{dly}, That when persons, from just views of
these blessings, are making a proper account and
improvement of them, they will be thus exercised.

We are then,

I. To instruct, that the gracious visit which Jeho-
vah, the God of Israel, hath made us in the incarna-
tion of the eternal Son, with the redemption ac-
complished by it, affords the highest grounds for

praise and thanksgiving. This we apprehend will clearly appear, if we consider,

1st, That by all this, the greatest kindness for, and good will towards the sons of men, were displayed. In common life, when a kindness is entertained by one person towards another, more especially when in an explicit manner it is expressed, we usually, and justly, consider, that the person to whom the kindness has been shewed, has sufficient grounds for, and is under particular obligations to make suitable acknowledgements to that person who has discovered such good will towards him, as being a proper and reasonable return: and we may add, that the more dignified the person is who confers the favour, the greater the kindness, and the more pains which are employed to express it; we say, the more of all this that there is, the higher will the obligations be to make suitable acknowledgements in return. Well, if this is admitted, as doubtless it must, then in the present instance, without question, there is afforded the best grounds for praise and thanksgiving, in regard of that gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath made us in the incarnation of the eternal Son, and that redemption which was accomplished by it; for by all this, the greatest kindness towards the Sons of men was displayed, and in this display the several circumstances before referred to with striking energy present themselves.

Not only did God entertain a purpose of grace towards some of mankind, but he also in the most explicit manner expressed it. In the divine reckoning, it was by no means enough, that from the ages of eternity he had such kindness for our ruined race in his heart; he did not rest satisfied till there was an actual declaration made of it in the morning of time; nay, till there was the most undeniable proof afforded at the appointed season.

And

And hence we are laid under the deepest obligations to render praise and thanksgiving. But the grounds for this exercise will appear in a very striking light, if, for a moment, we advert to the person who had such good will towards us; and if we at the same time attend to the strength of affection which appeared, the uncommon pains which were employed to evidence this kindness. If it shall be inquired, who is the party that has expressed so much kindness for wretched guilty man; it must be answered, that this is none other than the Supreme, the independent, the self-existent Jehovah, a Trinity of persons subsisting in the unity of essence. Is it possible that this is the fact? Can it be, that He, who is the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, should thus condescend to take the smallest notice of, at least discover so much good will towards worms on his footstool! But though this should be, is it possible that He, who hath put on righteousness as a breast-plate, who hath put on the garments of vengeance, and is clad with zeal as a cloke, who has said, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it? Is it possible that he can express the least kindness for, or good will towards those wretches who so daringly insulted his goodness, and rebelled against his authority? Yes, to the eternal wonder of men and angels be it known, that that same God whose honour and glory we have trampled upon, whose kindness we have slighted, and whose law we have grossly violated, he thought upon us in our low and lost estate; for his mercy endureth ever. But this is not all; for not only did Jehovah think upon, and entertain a good will towards us; his kindness was truly great: It was not a slight, but a strong affection which he had; nay, it was such as gave being to the counsel of peace, to that eternal covenant which was between the Father and the Son: It was so ardent, that it behoved to flow forth towards

towards its favoured objects; and to accomplish this, divine wisdom had to display its amazing skill by discovering this witty invention; how mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness and peace might kiss each other, in behalf of guilty men: How Jehovah might be just while he is the justifier of the ungodly. And though this could be attained at no less expence, than the shedding the precious blood of the eternal Son, yet such was his kindness, that this was freely tendered. His love was indeed without a parallel. That we might have the fullest evidence of his good will towards us, Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath, in the person of the eternal Son, visited us. The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He became a man of sorrows, and was acquainted with griefs: He poured out his soul as offering for sin, and was numbered with the transgressors. All which being considered, are we not laid under most indispensable obligations? have we not the most sufficient grounds afforded to influence the exercise of praise and thanksgiving?

¶ 2d, This will become farther evident, if it is considered, that by this visit, and the redemption following upon it, the greatest good has been done to the sons of men; the richest and the most abundant blessings have been procured and secured for them. Tho' a person's entertaining a kindness for another, lays this other under obligations to make suitable acknowledgements, doubtless he must have better reason, and be under stronger obligations to do so, if the professions of kindness be realized, and he is made to experience some substantial favours at his hands; in regard he has then to thank him, not only for his good wishes, but also for his good deeds, ascertaining those to be genuine. And the greater the favours, which are conferred, the more enlarged the grounds; the higher will the obligations be to make such return. Well, thus it

is in the present instance; not only has the greatest kindness been entertained in favour of rebellious men, and hence ground for suitable acknowledgements; but also, while this kindness could not but be unfeigned as proceeding from the God of truth, it has been eminently demonstrated to be such by the greatest good, the richest, the most abundant blessings arising to us from thence.

That this is the fact is unquestionable; for by the gracious visit, and the redemption following upon it, there is accomplished deliverance from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God which is consequential upon it, from the bondage of sin and Satan, and from the world, its vile allurements, and various entanglements; there is also produced freedom from the law as a covenant of works; from the direful influence of self, from all the evil of suffering, from death and the grave, and in short, from every evil and enemy whatever. But this is not all; for while delivered from every evil, we also are redeemed to God, a three-one God in Christ, to the enjoyment of all good in and with him; have eternal life, with all saving and spiritual blessings, secured to us. And this being most undoubted, it is thence clear, that the greatest good has been done to the sons of men; for what greater can be proposed, than to be brought from the utmost of sin and misery, to be advanced to the heights of holiness and happiness? And if the greatest good has been done, it is no less obvious, that there is thence afforded the highest grounds for praise and thanksgiving. For as praise in its nature is a making acknowledgements for favours conferred, so the greater and more enlarged these favours are, the more and the stronger are the grounds which we have for this exercise; and if the greatest good has been conferred, there is then certainly

afforded

afforded the highest and best grounds to influence praise and thanksgiving, as it said, *sermon on the mount* 30. The matter becomes still more undoubted, if we advert to the following consideration, that all this was what we stood in the most absolute need of. Though a person's shewing a kindness for, and doing another all the good in his power, lays this other under particular obligations to make acknowledgements; yet certainly this kindness must be considered as greater, and the obligations to thanksgiving still stronger, if the person was in real need, and more so, if he has reason to think that his benefactor was in the full knowledge of this circumstance, and under its influence exerted himself in his favour. If so, without question there is hence additional ground, besides every other consideration, for enlarged acknowledgements. Well, that is, it in the present instance. Not only has God shewed a kindness for the sons of men, not only has he done them the greatest good, but all this was what there was the most absolute need of; and, as in doing this, God could not fail to act from the most perfect knowledge of our circumstances, doubtless, from hence, the grounds for thanksgiving are in an especial manner enlarged.

That we stood in the most absolute need of the divine interposition, is beyond dispute. All mankind had by so destroyed themselves; and though in this state they had no one to pity or care for them, they were besides altogether incapable to help themselves, and so were in a situation truly distressing; and this being the case, it is obvious, that they were in real need of all the kindness that was shewed them, all the good that was done them, for otherwise they must have perished: In this view, the matter becomes of great importance. The favour however is in a particular manner enhanced, when we also take into consideration, that,

that, in doing this, God all along acted, and could not but act, from a perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He needs not that any should testify what is in man. He knows every thing relating to him; in particular, he is well acquainted with that state of wretchedness into which mankind had brought themselves; it was in consequence of this foreseeing them as in such a state, that he entertained a good-will towards a select number of them, and exerted himself in their behalf; it was when they were seen lying in their blood, that he said unto them, Live: his time was then a time of love; While therefore the divine interposition in our behalf was great kindness in itself, it was rendered still greater by the need we had of it; and also, that it was expressly from a knowledge of this that Jehovah acted when he brought relief: and thence there is afforded the most sufficient grounds for praise and thanksgiving. "O give thanks to the God of gods, who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from the hands of our enemies; for his mercy endureth for ever."

4th, We shall only add, as a further illustration of this branch of the proposition, that the whole of what has been done is in favour of persons who were altogether undeserving of it; nay, who by their evil conduct had become justly obnoxious to the divine wrath and indignation: and hence, in this view, the matter is unquestionable. A kindness shewed, and a favour conferred, deserves at any rate to be taken notice of, and this the more if we are in real need of either; but when to both these considerations there is superadded this other, that we had no claim to any kindness, no right to insist upon any favour, but quite the reverse, and yet are brought to the experience of both; in these circumstances, doubtless, our obligations to the person are truly great, and the grounds for making suitable acknowledgements

acknowledgements are vastly enlarged. Well, thus is it in the present instance; The gracious visit which Jehovah has made us, and the glorious effect following upon it, were blessings altogether undeserved by us, what we had no right to insist upon, but quite the reverse. And that this is the fact cannot be denied. It certainly requires small discernment with any who are in the least degree acquainted with the history of mankind to admit this. Nothing can be plainer, than that we deserve no good, that we deserve all ill at God's hands, in regard we have sinned against him. When therefore Jehovah vouchsafes any kindness to the sons of men, it is clear, that in doing so, he comes, and must come, over multitudes of provocations, and blesses freely.

To apply this general remark to the present instance. When Jehovah, the God of Israel, visited us, had we any claim or title, even the smallest, to expect this favour? By no means; quite the reverse. Had we not, previous to this, burst asunder his bands, and cast away his cords from us? Had we not given up with all interest in and connection with him? Did we not both in our hearts and by our conduct say, We will not have this man to reign over us; we will not either be subject to his authority, or in any respect indebted to his goodness and grace? And conform to all this, were we not flying farther and farther away from him, unwilling, as it should seem, to have the least intercourse with him? In these circumstances, did we deserve such kindness at his hands? Was he under obligations to extend his favour to persons who thus contemned his authority, despised his goodness, and disregarded his displeasure? To alledge this would be most inconsiderate. That therefore he thought upon us, visited and hath redeemed us, must certainly be ascribed to the superabounding riches of divine
mercy

mercy and grace, as being in every respect unmerited on our part; nay, so far from deserving such kindness, we had rendered ourselves obnoxious to a dispensation quite the reverse. There is therefore, without question, hence afforded the highest grounds for praise and thanksgiving, with all those who are the favoured objects of this gracious dispensation.

2. The *second* branch of the proposition to be illustrated is, that when persons, from just views of those blessings, are making a proper account and improvement of them, they will be exercised in praising and blessing God upon these grounds. Before entering upon this, that we may the better be understood in what follows, it will be necessary that we shortly explain what is intended by just views of those blessings, and what is included in making a proper account and improvement of them. By just views, we would express a spiritual supernatural discernment of these blessings in their genuine nature and high importance, as produced by the powerful energy and operation of the Holy Spirit, through the medium of that revelation which he has given of them: it is a seeing light in God's light clearly. The making a proper account, a suitable improvement, as it will be in proportion to that discernment we have; so it points out to us, that special application and appropriation of the whole to ourselves, in the exercise of a lively faith, which is through the influence and efficacy of the eternal Spirit; it is a thinking and speaking as did Zacharias, "He hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up for us an horn of salvation in the house of his servant David." Whenever and where-ever this is in some measure realised, we apprehend it cannot fail but that such will be exercised in offering praise

The last branch of the proposition is, and

and thanksgiving to the God of their mercies. —

This will be the more evident if,

1st, It be considered, that just views as to this important matter natively and necessarily will lead forward to such exercise. We are far from thinking, or would we assert, that all such as are in some sort acquainted with this visit, and its gracious effect, will be thus exercised. Observation and experience prove the direct reverse. But then there is a vast difference between a being in some sort acquainted with, and having just views as to this matter; there may be much apprehended, while there is no real saving knowledge; there may be a fund of ingenious speculative notions upon this subject in the head, when there is not the least degree of spiritual supernatural discernment as to it in the heart; and when matters are thus situated, what is stated can by no means follow; for after all that persons have acquired, still they are without those views, which in their nature are, and which deserve to be denominated just and proper; and while this should be carefully adverted to, what we have alledged, when duly considered, will turn out to be well-founded. Ingratitude in every case is the effect of insensibility, as the reverse is always in so far the result of our having proper notions and just apprehensions as to matters. Does not experience instruct us, that in proportion as we understand and esteem a kindness which may be done us, we are in consequence as it were powerfully influenced to make suitable acknowledgements, unless this influence is somehow counteracted? This at any rate is remarkably the case when we attain to just and distinct apprehensions of the divine goodness towards us: those views and apprehensions, when they operate upon persons, in their nature and tendency, have an overcoming, nay an irresistible influence and efficacy to this end; and the more

more lively and distinct the apprehensions are, the more powerfully will the mind be thus disposed. The love of Christ constrains persons. The Holy Spirit is the great worker in all this: By taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them to us, he brings persons to a proper discernment of matters; and under the influence of this discernment, by his powerful energy, he produces proper exercise in relation to what is before them. This is not a matter of mere speculation, it is fully established from experience. Thus it was with Zacharias in our text, and with the Psalmist in a variety of instances, particularly in Psalm cxvi. 12. Having been brought to some due apprehension of the divine goodness towards him, this powerfully influenced proper exercise. Says he, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

2d, This is the only proper return which we can make to the Lord for all his kindness. Nothing is more obvious, than that when any thing has been received, some return or other should be rendered. What the return shall be, must vary according to the nature of the thing received, and the manner in which it has been conferred. If what has been received comes as a free gift, and is the produce of creature-bounty, in such a case the return may be different: The first and most natural that occurs, is the making suitable acknowledgements for the favour. Another return may be, according as ability and inclination shall direct, to make a reciprocal present; and when this is done, the obligations to gratitude are somewhat lessened, in regard the favour is then in some sort returned. If, however, what is received be the produce of divine goodness, the whole of which must come as a free gift, there is only one return that can be rendered. It cannot be here as between man and man; there cannot be

a reciprocal exchange of gifts: What have we of this nature to render to the Lord? Nothing whatever. All that we are, have, and can do, is his in absolute right and property. It therefore remains, as the only return competent to us, that we render becoming acknowledgements to the Lord for his kindness, that we give unto him that praise which is his due. Such being the case, that some return in justice ought to be rendered to the Lord for his goodness, and that a rendering due praise is the only proper return competent to creatures, doubtless it must thence follow, that all who are acting a proper part will be thus exercised. Those who have just views of the divine kindness towards them, will stir up themselves and provoke others to give unto the Lord that glory which is his due. Thus the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," "and forget not all his benefits — Oh that men" "would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for" "his works of wonder done unto the sons of" "men!"

3d, This is expressly required of us by God himself; and if so, certainly all who are acting a proper part will not fail to have a becoming respect to this his commandment. While a sense of the divine kindness will influence praise and thanksgiving, a sense of duty will in like manner operate to produce this exercise; and it is to be observed, that the exercise would not have been warrantable, unless the divine authority had been interposed to render it such: But this being interposed, it is rendered indispensable; and that this is interposed is unquestionable. To this purpose it is said, "Give" "unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." — "Sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath" "done marvellous things; his right hand and his" "holy arm hath gotten him the victory." — "Sing" "unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent" "things;"

"things; this is known in all the earth: Offer
 "unto God thanksgiving." Thus you see it is
 the will of God, that we render to him that praise
 which is his due; and this being the case, we may
 from hence ascertain the truth of this branch of
 the proposition: For while every real Christian
 when acting in character will have it as an unfeign-
 ed wish, and his constant study, that he may have
 a respect to all God's commandments, he will in a
 particular manner have it as his desire and aim,
 that he yield an obedience to this delightful part of
 duty.

4th, It is expressly secured by gracious promise,
 and therefore it cannot fail to be realised. This is
 what puts the matter beyond a doubt, and gives an
 emphasis to all that has before been stated upon
 this part of our subject. The divine promise gives
 to those just views which may be attained, all the
 efficacy which they should have; it brings persons
 forward to a rendering that return which is incum-
 bent upon them; it both furnishes with the know-
 ledge of and a capacity for that duty which is re-
 quired; and in short, produces that revenue of
 glory which should arise to the Lord God of Israel
 for his kindness and grace to the sons of men.
 That it is secured by gracious promise that persons
 shall be thus exercised, is evident: For it is written,
 "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will
 "deliver thee, and *thou shalt glorify me*;" Psalm
 l. 15. "They shall come, and shall declare his
 "righteousness unto a people that shall be born,
 "and that he hath done this;" Psalm xxii. 31.
 "This people have I formed for myself, *they shall*
 "*shew forth my praise*;" Isaiah, xliii. 21. Words
 cannot be more explicit and pointed than these;
 therefore it may hence be concluded, that thus it
 shall be. The Lord is not a man, that he should
 lie; or the son of man, that he should repent, Hath

he said it, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken it, and shall he not bring it to pass?

5th, It is one special design which God had in view by these his gracious dispensations, a design which cannot fail to be accomplished, that such an account and improvement should be made of them; and therefore thus will persons be exercised. The Lord does nothing in vain: He has always some purpose in view by all his dispensations; and this is what cannot fail to take effect in its season. For his counsel must stand: he will do all his pleasure. When the Lord of hosts hath purposed, who shall disannul it? The advancement of his own glory is his leading design; it is eminently so in that salvation wrought by him. But while he proposes to glorify himself by those works of wonder which are done unto the sons of men, he has also ordered, that a revenue of praise should be rendered to him by those whom he hath visited and redeemed. The former of these is unquestionable, and the latter is no less undoubted: we have this expressly ascertained in various places of Scripture. Jehovah himself, by the Prophet Isaiah, pronounces the favoured objects of this dispensation, the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, the work of his hand, and all this, that in and by them he might be glorified. By the prophet Jeremiah, he declares, that his pardoning sin, and his cleansing from iniquity, shall be to him for a name of joy, a praise and an honour, before all the nations of the earth. The Apostle Paul to the same purpose asserts, that himself and the believing Ephesians were predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, with the express design that the whole might be to the praise of the glory of divine grace. And he also intimates in general, that the great love with which God loved them, and all its glorious effects unto and upon them, were with this view, that for the present, and through

through the ages of eternity, there might be a declaring what is the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards them, through Christ Jesus. Thus you see that this was God's great design, a design which cannot fail; for he is of one mind, and who can turn him? What his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

6th, In the last place, this has in innumerable instances been verified; and thence it may be concluded, that all who are in similar circumstances, will in like manner be exercised.—Facts are stubborn things, and plead most forcibly in favour of that point towards which they are directed. In the present instance, what is alledged is not a matter of mere speculation; it has been fully verified in the experience and exercise of multitudes; nay, of all who are, or have been in the circumstances stated. Thus it was with Zacharias in our text. In the following chapter, a choir of angels, though less interested in the matter, were animated with the same spirit. Thus also Simeon, and Anna the prophetess. Thus the Apostle Paul. "Thanks," says he, "be to God for his unspeakable gift." Thus the Apostle Peter. "Blessed be the God" and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a new and lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Nay, if we stretch our views beyond this varying scene, and penetrate into those august abodes, where joy is full, and pleasures without end, we have it ascertained, that then and there a great multitude which no man can number, all the angels which stand round about the throne, the elders, and the four beasts, fall upon their faces, and worship God, saying, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Seeing then

then we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses establishing this truth, may we not conclude, from what has been in time past on earth, and from what will be the unceasing employ of the saints in heaven, what must be the distinguished exercise of God's chosen people in every period, in relation to this visit, and the redemption accomplished by it?

IV. It now only remains, that we attempt some improvement of the subject. And from what has been observed, many important lessons may be deduced; such as,

1. We may hence learn what was the grand source of all spiritual blessings to the sons of men; it certainly was the eternal love of a Three-one God in the person of the Father. We are very apt to form mistaken notions about many things, and particularly in regard to the important mystery of the adorable Godhead. Unable to comprehend, in any tolerable manner, so great a mystery as the unity of nature and essence, while, at the same time, there is a distinction in personal subsistence, we are too ready to err in our notions upon this important subject; and our common error lies in our having more forbidding views of God the Father, than of God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost; as if the Father was more inaccessible, was clothed with greater majesty, and was more terrible to mankind than the Son or the Holy Spirit. But in so far as this prevails it should be considered as our infirmity; nay, as highly sinful. What Moses said to Israel is an undoubted truth, "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord." Though distinct in personal subsistence, they are one in nature and essence, equal in power and glory. We therefore never conceive aright in relation to any of the persons of the adorable Trinity, if we consider

der him as possessing a perfection or excellency either superior or inferior to the rest; for if so, they could not be equal in power and glory; which to suppose would be blasphemous.

The misapprehension above referred to, it would seem, has in so far arisen from a partial attention to the different dispensations, which, according to our manner of apprehending and expressing things, is usually ascribed to the different persons of the Trinity in the œconomy of redemption; in regard it is usual to consider God in the person of the Father as sustaining the dignity of the Godhead, and as such, demanding the execution of the threatening against the guilty transgressor; while God in the person of the Son, is represented as interposing in behalf of a select number of Adam's ruined race, fully answering all demands which can be brought against them; and God in the person of the Holy Spirit, is also set forth as concurring in this merciful interposition, applying and rendering effectual the blessing thus purchased. But we always form mistaken apprehensions as to this matter, if, in the different dispensations, we consider any of the persons of the Godhead as acting separately, or in fact distinct from the rest, in regard this is impossible.

With respect to all these dispensations, we are to conceive of them thus, that in each of them it is the One God actually working, though at the same time personally considered, according to the different operations which each has ascribed to him in the œconomy of redemption: and it cannot be otherwise; for the Lord our God is but one Lord. Hence, when enabled to discern aright as to the mystery of redemption, we will soon perceive, that in that grand affair we are equally indebted to all the persons of the adorable Trinity; and in particular, that the eternal love of God, in the person
of

of the Father, is the glorious source of all spiritual blessings to the sons of men. This was what gave motion at first to all the wheels in relation to the redemption of sinners: It is what keeps them still in motion: It was in consequence of this, that Jesus visited and redeemed his people.—“ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” Well therefore may we join with the apostle, and say, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ.”

2. We may hence discern the glorious channel through which all spiritual blessings do flow to the sons of men. This certainly was and is the gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel, made us in the person and incarnation of the eternal Son. In order to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings by the sons of men, it is not enough that there was a fulness of these for them in the divine purpose from the ages of eternity; it is indispensably requisite that these flow forth towards them. But they could not flow forth unless in a way honourable to their glorious giver, and of safe conveyance to the indigent receivers. It was by no means every channel that was subservient to communicate the contents of the eternal purpose to the favoured persons upon whom it did terminate. By the disobedience of the first man, and their connection in that trespass, the whole of mankind had forfeited the divine favour, and had incurred his righteous displeasure; of course they could obtain no good from God on their own account, or by their own exertions: every blessing must necessarily be looked for in another channel; and doubtless this channel was, is, and could be no other than the eternal Son. The gracious visit which he made us, when he became incarnate,

carnate, and submitted to a course of service and sufferings in our world; this was the device of infinite wisdom, and therefore could not fail to be in every respect unexceptionable: It was the solemn appointment of Jehovah, in the person of the Father, as sustaining the dignity of the Godhead, for him hath God the Father sealed; and hence it may be fully depended upon. The Redeemer himself glories in this appointment, and presents himself to mankind under this character, as having acted in full conformity to it; and he presents himself, that, in the exercise of a lively faith, he may be improved and employed as such. Says he, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man can come unto the Father but by me." He is the Father's way to us, and our way to the Father. By this new and living way, we may with boldness enter into the holiest, demand and devise liberally from a God of grace, as seated upon his throne of mercy; and it is in this glorious channel that innumerable blessings descend to and upon us, from the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation. Ought we not therefore to join with those before the throne, admiring and adoring the ineffable love of the eternal Son, and say, "Thou art worthy to open the book, and loose the seven seals; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

3. We have hence pointed out to us the great worker, when the distinguished objects of the divine favour are brought to the present and full possession of those spiritual and eternal blessings to which they were chosen. This is none other than Jehovah in the person of the ever blessed Spirit: He from eternity engaged in this undertaking, and, ever since opportunity was given him, has in continuance been employed in this work, and he will not cease exerting himself, till his undertaking be completely fulfilled, and every elect vessel perfectly redeemed

ed to God: And as he is the great, so he is the alone worker.—Creatures are by no means either his rivals or his assistants in the commencement, on-carrying, or consummation of this important business. Instruments they are in his hands, and sometimes useful, as employed, directed, and strengthened by him; but this is the highest that they can boast of. For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. But he works so as none can let him: He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working, and his undertaking, his management in the application of the purchased redemption, discovers that his love and grace for mankind was no less strong and ardent than that of the Father or the Son. It was the same love and grace that diffused itself and was displayed in the whole of that procedure which appears in their behalf; and therefore the more that we know and contemplate this grand affair, the more matter will it afford for wonder and admiration, and the greater will we perceive our obligations are to serve, honour, and praise a Three-one God, as being equally indebted to all of them for that redemption of which we stood in the most absolute need.

4. We may hence perceive what is that first blessing to the actual fruits of which any of the ruined family of Adam are at length brought; why, it is their being chosen in Christ, their being chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth; their being solemnly set apart by God for himself, and from the ages of eternity declared to be his people, distinguished from all others, by their being the special objects of his love and kindness towards them, notwithstanding the rebellious part they were foreseen to act against him. Hence it is observable, that in our text, the gracious visit which Jehovah, the God of Israel,

Israel, made us, and the redemption following upon it, is not stated as the commencement of the divine kindness towards its favoured objects; there was a previous display of his grace and goodness: They were, by an eternal, immutable decree, constituted his people, and hence are viewed to be, are expressly designed as such; and their being thus privileged must doubtless be considered as a special blessing. Nor is this the only place where this truth is established: it is frequently presented to our view in the sacred Scriptures. A striking instance you have in what is stated by the apostle, when representing the whole of spiritual blessings in one golden chain; he makes this the first link; he commences the enjoyment with being foreknown and predestinated. And this, however little attended to, though much opposed in our day, is a most undoubted truth. Election is at once a most capital and comfortable blessing, is the unquestionable privilege of those who are made partakers of any special blessing whatever; of course it must be a leading, a first blessing: it is that which introduces to, and secures the enjoyment of all other blessings whatever. — This brings us,

5. To another important conclusion, and that is, that there is an infallible connection betwixt election and the enjoyment of all other spiritual blessings. The being privileged with the one, ascertains the enjoyment of the other in due time. Election virtually includes under it, and in its nature leads forward to the being put in possession of, a complete salvation. Spiritual blessings are inseparably connected; where there is one, there must and will in due time be all. Thus you observe in the text, there is as it were a connection stated betwixt the distinguished objects of the kindness expressed, and the kindness itself; intimating in effect, that this was nothing other than what necessarily must be. Having become his people, there

was a necessity that they should be visited and redeemed; a necessity not indeed absolutely so in its nature, but arising from the sovereign will and purpose of Jehovah rendering it such. Thus also the Psalmist, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Being, and because they are the one, they shall assuredly become the other. The apostle is, if possible, still more decisive upon the point: "For," says he, "whom he did fore-know, them he did predestinate; whom he did predestinate, them he called; whom he called, them he justified; and whom he justified, them he glorified:" thus stating an infallible connection betwixt the commencement and consummation of salvation. And this certainly is the fact; for our God is a rock, and his work is perfect. Election then is a blessing, the comfort of which we should aspire after; but in doing so, we must beware of improper conduct. This is not to be the first object of our concern; to make it such would be unavailing. Secret things are beyond our reach till they are revealed. We must therefore wait the revelation of election, till we can have comfort from it in our experience. And how is it revealed? Why, by persons being made partakers of those blessings which stand infallibly connected with it; and having the one, we may assuredly conclude in favour of the other. Thus the apostle, "Give all diligence to make your calling and your election sure." The former ascertained, the latter must be equally undoubted; for those only are effectually called, who were previously predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.

6. We have afforded the most sufficient grounds to faith in trusting God for what he has promised. He is faithful that hath promised, and will in due time accomplish all that he hath said. In the instances before us we have the most striking, the most

most undeniable evidence of the inviolable regard the Lord has to his word. This gracious visit, and that redemption which was spoken of, and promised in the ages of eternity, which was revealed to the church through successive periods since the beginning of time, was most punctually accomplished. At the appointed season Jesus visited and redeemed his people; and when this event was fulfilled, it was in exact correspondence with what had been revealed by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began. Has God been faithful in an affair of so much importance, in the accomplishment of an event which was so arduous and expensive? Can we, in consequence, doubt, that he will be less so in any other case. Surely we have not the smallest reason. We may thence firmly trust him with the fulfilment of his gracious word to us, his work in us; we have no ground for hesitation. If he was faithful so as not to spare his own Son, but deliver him up, surely it is impossible he can be unfaithful in any other instance: How shall he not with him give and do all things?

7. We may discern the excellency of the Christian above the Jewish dispensation. Though the Lord was gracious to his people under the Old-Testament dispensation, visited and redeemed them, yet they had to grope their way through much darkness, had to penetrate through various types and shadows, prophecies and promises, were only favoured with visits by his servants under different characters and capacities, and so could only see Christ's day afar off: whereas the day-spring from on high hath visited us. Unto us Christ the Son of righteousness himself hath arisen, and shines before us with the greatest lustre and brightness, with healing under his wings. They were fettered with the observance of various rites and ceremonies, a yoke and bondage which they were unable to bear; we

are put in possession of a glorious liberty with which Christ hath made us free. In short, they had to look forward to Christ as to come, and had to bottom their hope and confidence upon a redemption which was only in due time to be accomplished. But we have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we would do well to take heed. Instead of having to look forward to Christ as to come, we have to reflect upon this as an event already past, and may with confidence build our hopes as to present and future happiness upon that glorious work which was finished 1700 years ago upon mount Calvary; and, my brethren, it should be remembered, that to whom much is given, the more will be required.

8. We may and ought to bewail the blindness, the insatiation of the Jews. Though the fulness of time has long since arrived, though God has been faithful to his promise, though Christ has been punctual to his engagement, at the appointed season visited and redeemed his people; yet neither do the Jews perceive, nor will they believe this to be the case: though there is afforded evidence the most undeniable in proof of the fact, yet they are deaf to all reason, to every argument, and are truly hardened in their own conceits; their minds are blinded, there is a thick vail spread over their hearts and eyes, which is untaken away at this day. Hence they neither do know, nor will they take the benefit of this important event, or its gracious effect as mentioned in our text. It is incumbent upon us to bewail their wretchedness, their insatiation, to compassionate them in their forlorn estate. As they pitied and prayed for us Gentiles, when we were outcasts, it certainly becomes us in return, apart from every other consideration, to have them much on our hearts at a throne of grace, to wrestle with God for his gracious return to them, that he would take the vail from

from off their eyes, dispel the darkness of their understandings, that in his light they may see and know that the Messiah has visited and redeemed his people.

In the *last* place, We have pointed out to us our incumbent duty. This certainly lies in our being exercised as Zacharias was, in our text, in aiming at blessing the Lord God of Israel for his kindness and grace towards us, in visiting and redeeming his people; and to this end we should be in earnest for the Spirit being poured out upon us, our attaining to a spiritual discernment of these blessings, and that under the influence of his powerful energy we be brought, in the exercise of a lively faith, to make a suitable account and improvement of them; for it is only a special interest in them that will produce acceptable thanksgiving for them.

We shall close this subject with a short address to all in general. And we would exhort you to turn aside and behold this great sight, *the Lord God of Israel visiting and redeeming his people*. Great is the mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh. It is the manifold wisdom of God, the exceeding riches of his grace, and the working of his mighty power. It is that which the angels desire to look into; and much higher and better grounds have the sons of men to provoke their most sedulous attention towards it. To study aright and suitably improve this grand subject, is the one thing needful, that good part which shall never be taken from you. Be persuaded then to acquaint yourselves with the glorious visitor, the condescending visit which he hath made, and the gracious effects which it has produced. Be in earnest that Jesus may be apprehended by you in his true character, and in his real glory. Seek that the Holy Spirit may take of the things of Christ and shew them unto you. Apply to the visitor himself, for he, as the great Prophet of the church,

has the tongue of the learned, and can most effectually unvail his own glory and excellency. Aspire after just views as to the nature and importance of that gracious visit which he hath made us, and the glorious effects which it hath produced. Study to make a suitable account and improvement of both, and this by asserting a special claim to, and interest for yourselves in the whole. Pray for the Spirit, as the spirit of adoption, his working in you both to will and to do, and the work of faith with power. Wrestle for that day of power, when ye, as the Redeemer's people, shall be made willing to submit to his righteousness, and be subject to his rule in and over you; when ye shall glory in him as the Alpha and the Omega, as all and in all to you. Be exercised in daily improving that plentiful redemption that is with, through, and from the Lord God of Israel. Let all your wants be upon Jesus. Let your expectations be from him, and your desires towards him. Long for that happy time when the shadows shall flee away, and ye shall be with him to behold his glory, that glory which he had before the world began. In one word, be much employed in giving unto the Lord that glory which is his due. Nothing is more acceptable in his sight than praise. Render therefore unto the Lord for all his benefits. Offer unto the Lord thanksgiving; and let the great burden of your thanksgiving be his unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus. Bless the Lord God of Israel for electing love, for choosing Christ as the surety of a better testament, and a select number of mankind as his spiritual seed. Bless him for the glorious channel through which his purpose and grace flows forth. Bless him for the effectual application of the purchased redemption by the Holy Spirit. Stir up all that is within you to bless his holy name, and forget not all his benefits.

S E R-

S E R M O N X.

EPHESIANS, ii. 5.

By grace ye are saved.

WHEN Jesus in a gospel-dispensation is proclaiming himself as the Saviour, waits that he may be gracious, and is expressly requiring us to give him employment; it certainly interests us to understand the nature of that work which he proposes to perform, and the method by which he accomplishes it, that we thus may have it ascertained what entertainment ought to be rendered him. Would we wish instruction in both these important points, we have it satisfyingly afforded us in the chapter before us, and particularly in our text; in which the apostle, after having, in the preceding part of the chapter, pointed out the former state of the Ephesian believers, and explained, in some particulars, the nature of that happy change which had been wrought in and for them; he, in concise terms, represents the present state of matters with them, in consequence of their having fled for refuge, and laid hold on that help which was set before them. And in doing this, he first ascertains the true nature of their situation; they were *saved*, that is, were made partakers of a complete, an everlasting salvation. He then unfolds the glorious method through which the whole had been, and would

would be accomplished. It was by *grace*, that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ.—In discoursing from this subject we propose,

I. To consider the nature of that salvation which is here said to be enjoyed.

II. To illustrate and confirm the assertion in our text.

III. Make some improvement.

I. We are to consider the nature of that salvation which is here said to be enjoyed. We cannot propose to enumerate every particular which is contained under the comprehensive term *salvation*, a being saved; in regard this is impossible. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, and to the full possession of which they are in due time brought. What we therefore intend, is only to condescend upon some of the leading and capital articles belonging to this salvation; which we shall a little enlarge upon, and from them, as a specimen, the important nature of the blessing will in so far appear.—To proceed then,

1. Election is a primary blessing, and which accordingly in the outset deserves our consideration. This is the source, the fountain-blessing, from whence all others as it were issue forth, and by which they are secured. Jehovah having determined to create man, and after furnishing him with powers and abilities fully sufficient for what was required of him, to leave him to the freedom of his own will; having from eternity foreseen, that the whole of the human race, by the breach of that covenant made with Adam as their head and representative, would be involved in ruin, a ruin from which they could not extricate themselves;

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he entertained a purpose of grace towards some of these, and hence chose them, set them apart for himself; and this choice or election is the first part, the primary blessing, in that salvation, to the full possession of which they are in due time brought.

This election was from eternity a fruit and effect of everlasting love: It was not indeed till time commenced, and mankind had ruined themselves, that this could have any actual effect upon its objects; but Jehovah prevented with his goodness, and before misery had shed its baleful influence, nay, from everlasting, provided seasonable relief. Hence this election is declared to be "the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," "to have been from the beginning," and "before the foundation of the world." But *from the beginning, before the foundation of the world,* are expressions which clearly point out to us the ages of eternity. — Before the world was formed, or any creature existed, time did not commence: prior to this, duration was eternity, absolute eternity. This election is a distinguishing kindness: it is not common to all, but is peculiar to some. This is essential to the nature of the blessing. Had the whole of mankind been included under its influence, then there could have no such blessing existed. It is beyond question, that divine love passed by some, and suffered them to perish, while it terminated upon others, and distinguished them by its kindness. It is particular, that is, there is a particular specification of each individual who is interested in this blessing, upon whom it centers in all its influence and efficacy. Though this, as well as all the other blessings of salvation, extends to many, yet it does not do so in such manner as that it is an election only as to numbers, and not of persons: the one indeed cannot rightly be without the other, at least in the present case it is not. Not only was the precise number ascertained,

ascertained, but also the very individual persons who were thus favoured, were from everlasting expressly marked out and determined upon. Hence such are described as having "their names written in the Lamb's book of life," "written in heaven." And Jesus to this purpose declares, "I know whom I have chosen." The Psalmist also states it as undoubted fact, that "the Lord knoweth them that are his."

This election is an election of persons in Christ: Christ and the elect constitute one mystical body; he the head and they the members, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Those, therefore, that are interested in this blessing, were chosen in Christ as their head, their federal representative; and in this choice, were actually given to him to be redeemed by him. Says the apostle, Eph. i. 4; "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." It is an election to complete salvation, to the full possession of all those blessings which belong to it, and is itself a special part of it. Hence we read of "being chosen to salvation." And the apostle, Rom. viii. 29. 30. when representing the whole blessings of salvation in one beautiful chain, makes this the first link; and while he does so, he states an inseparable connection betwixt election and glorification, the one introducing to and firmly securing the enjoyment of the other in due time. It is an election to holiness as the means, as well as complete salvation as the end. Such as are thus favoured, are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ; and being made meet for, they are in due time brought to the possession of that inheritance, which is with the saints in light: They "are chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." In short, it is an unchangeable, immutable purpose with God. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; and the

"the thoughts of his heart to all generations." It has for its great object the advancement of his own glory: In agreeableness to which, the apostle intimates, Rom. ix. 23, that the vessels of mercy, which were afore prepared unto glory, was with the express design that the riches of his glory might be made known unto and upon them.

2. Another blessing belonging to salvation, and next to election, is regeneration; or, as our Saviour expresses it, a being born again. This though a great and incomprehensible mystery to carnal minds, is a special constituent of salvation, and indispensably necessary to our entering into the kingdom of heaven. Mankind having destroyed themselves by sin, in order to the recovery and restoration of any, there must be a new creation. That ruin which has befallen us is such, of so extensive a nature, that it admits of no repairs; all things must be made new; a new nature must be given us; a new heart, and a right spirit must be put within us; new desires, new dispositions, new exercises, and new enjoyments must be produced; and to our experiencing all this, there must be a being born again; or, as the apostle expresses it, the being "renewed in the spirit of our mind."

This is a real, thorough change, by which the person is made altogether a new creature. There is not indeed a change of substances, but of qualities; vitious qualities are removed, and contrary dispositions are placed in their room: the old man is put off, the new man is put on. It is a spiritual, supernatural change, the special work of a Three-one God, as in Christ acting in the person's behalf, and is brought about by means of the word. He that is so privileged, is "born from above, is born of God," "of the Spirit," is born "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is a change

change after or into the image of God: The image of Satan is defaced, and the image of God is restored upon the soul, "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." Such "are transformed to the same image from glory to glory." It is an universal change; there is a renewal of the whole man, soul and body, in all their powers and members. It is, however, at first but an imperfect change, and so admits of a progress in order to its arriving at perfection; at the same time it is a lasting change: the life infused in regeneration can never totally or finally be extinguished. Such as "are born again, their seed remaineth in them." In short, it is a change by which the understanding is enlightened, the will is renewed, the affections are spiritualized, the conscience is purged, the memory is enlarged and bettered, the body and its members are consecrated to holiness, and the conversation is rectified; instead of speaking as formerly the language of Ashdod, the conversation of such as are born again is from heaven.

3. Another blessing following upon regeneration, is effectual calling. This, by some, is not considered as distinct from, but as one and the same blessing with regeneration; in regard in their view, persons cannot be effectually called till regenerated; and when regenerated they are effectually called. We, however, think it not improper to distinguish betwixt them, and would consider regeneration as a blessing, in virtue of which, by the change which is effected, and the implantation of gracious habits, a capacity is afforded for the persons attaining to the enjoyment of this other blessing, effectual calling; and that this in its nature is a gracious effect, which instantly follows upon that change which has been produced, the actual improvement and exercise of those gracious habits which are implanted.

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The sinner having destroyed himself, and being utterly incapable by his own power and wisdom to amend matters, he is in absolute need of help. But though help, and most sufficient help, has been provided for, and is actually proposed to him, yet, as being dead in trespasses and sins, as being both unable and unwilling, he neither does nor can listen to the joyful sound. The gracious calls which are given, although loud, particular, and affecting, while they are only external, can make no suitable impression upon him. When, therefore, persons are effectually called, it is thus brought about: A new creation having been produced, the powers of the soul having been new-moulded, life infused, and strength imparted, and thus a capacity afforded for what follows; the jubilee trumpet is so sounded, or, in other words, the gospel, as impregnated with divine power so operates, that, under the management of the Holy Spirit, the great worker, it has efficacy, and actually brings forward persons to their yielding the obedience of faith to those calls of grace with which they are privileged. They both hear and obey: the word takes possession of them; and they on their part assert a special claim to it and its gracious contents. Thus they are effectually called; and this in its nature is a believing improvement of a whole Christ, corresponding to that offer and exhibition which is made of him in the gospel, a submitting to his righteousness, a being subject to his rule in and over us.

This calling is denominated effectual, to distinguish it from that which is in common enjoyed by all the bearers of the gospel, and which, while only such, has no solid or lasting impression whatever: It is the work of the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word, either read, preached, or as brought to remembrance. Sometimes persons may be in
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actual possession of this blessing, who yet cannot with confidence lay claim to it. The Spirit often works secretly and insensibly. This is not unfrequently the case with those who have been thus privileged in early youth. Though persons may not be able with precision to ascertain the commencement of the blessing; yet if they have any solid ground to suppose that it really exists with them, this should in the mean while satisfy; and the Lord will in his time bring them to recollect the day of their espousals, when they were first determined and enabled to give their hand and heart to Christ. If persons know nothing of a disposition to obey the calls of grace, a desire this way, they have much reason to be alarmed.

4. Another blessing is repentance unto life. This is a constituent part of that salvation which a gracious God vouchsafes. It is to be taken up in two points of view, as our duty and as our privilege. In the one instance it proceeds from the moral law, in the other it is a blessing promised by the gospel. Our obligations to this exercise arise from our subjection to the law, the influence it has over us. Our acceptable discharge of this duty is to be accounted for from the efficacy which the promise, as suitably improved, has upon us, and is to be considered as an high privilege. In keeping of God's commandments there is an exceeding great reward:—"Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." This is remarkably the case in the present instance. There cannot be a more distressful or dangerous situation than to be in love with sin, and in league with iniquity: the wages of sin is death. Therefore, to have the bonds of iniquity burst asunder, to be delivered from that bondage and captivity we were under to the lusts of our own heart, to be brought to loath and abhor ourselves for sin that we have done, must

must be a desirable privilege. Such sickness is not to death or any dismal issue, but to the glory of God: accordingly, this is what should earnestly be sought after.

Repentance in its true nature is a confessing iniquity, a taking with all those charges of guiltiness and unrighteousness which are or can be brought against us; and this not in a formal, careless, or general way, but in truth, with deep concern, and in most particular explicit terms: It is a grief and sorrow of heart on account of sin, a viewing sin in its native deformity, loathing and abhorring ourselves on account of it: It is a hating sin, as sin, as that evil and bitter thing which God hates, a turning from it, and this not merely in part, but wholly, a turning to God, to the love and practice of holiness; or, as it is well expressed in our Shorter Catechism, "with full purpose of heart, and endeavour " after new obedience."

That repentance which is unto life, and which need not be repented of, must proceed from life; for, till the person is made spiritually alive, there can be no spiritual exertion whatever. In the present case there must not only be life, but there must be light previous to its existence. When genuine, it arises from and is promoted by a true sight and sense of sin, an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, as terminating upon the person; and therefore, the understanding must be savingly enlightened, the will renewed, and faith wrought in the heart: for till all this is produced, there can be no proper discernment of sin; and where there is no proper discernment of sin, there can be no true repentance. And it is farther to be attended to, that as the malignity of sin is no where more strikingly displayed than in the cross of Christ, and in the exceeding riches of that grace which reigns through righteousness; so it is in the

way of a believing improvement of all this, that the hearts of any are effectually and comfortably melted down to an acceptable mourning on account of sin. "They shall look on me whom they have pierced," and shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Zech. xii. 10. And you will observe, that it is according to the experience and suitable apprehension of the riches of divine grace, as displayed towards persons, that their repentance will be proportioned. Thus, after an illustrious manifestation of the divine goodness, it is proposed as a native and necessary consequence, under the influence of the Spirit of all grace. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

Repentance, as it is a duty which is ever incumbent upon us, so it is a blessing which we should unceasingly inquire after. In many things we offend, and in all we come short of the glory of God; and therefore we are never without sufficient grounds to influence this exercise. We are, however, never to imagine that repentance is necessary in order to our obtaining the forgiveness of sins, or, as what in some sort is subservient to our enjoying it. On the contrary, our exercise in this instance can never be genuine or acceptable, but when it proceeds from the actual experience of forgiveness. It is only those who, under the influence of the Spirit of all grace, view their sins as having pierced Christ, and are enabled thus to believe the forgiveness of them through him, that to purpose mourn on account of them. A sight of unpardoned sin may alarm, but it will never humble the soul. Repentance, as it is from life, so it is unto

unto life: In its nature it is a part of that death to sin, and that life unto righteousness, which those spiritually alive are pressing after.

5. Justification is another distinguishing part of that salvation which is by grace. By the offence of one, sin entered, and death by sin; and death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. By our actual transgressions, as proceeding from the original trespass, we are rendered still more guilty. In both ways, we are not only under a sentence of condemnation, but are also unrighteous, as being divested of that original uprightness with which we were at first endowed. Relief in both these instances is indispensably necessary; and as necessary, it is graciously vouchsafed in that salvation which is by our Lord Jesus Christ; for it presents us with the blessing of justification, and this comprehends under it all that is required. It is usually considered as consisting of two parts, so inseparably united, and so clearly following one another, as that they properly constitute but one blessing. These two parts are, the forgiveness of sin, and an acceptance of the person as righteous.

Forgiveness of sin has a respect to the guilt of sin, and points out a freedom from it; and this both as to the guilt itself and those consequences to which it rendered the person liable. Guilt is an obligation to punishment, and binds over to suffering. Forgiveness is a dissolving, a releasing from that obligation. Guilt is as a chain with which sinners are bound, are fettered by the law, and hence are under condemnation, are rendered subject to punishment. Forgiveness is that by which this chain is cut asunder, and the prisoner set at liberty. The pardoned soul is one who is acquitted from those charges which law and justice have to bring against him; and this not in a partial, but in the fullest manner, and by a sentence in his favour, which is

absolutely irreverfable. He is, he can be no more under a fentence of condemnation; he is no longer in hazard of eternal vengeance.—When fin is forgiven, it is fo forgiven as that it can never afterwards rife up in judgement againft the perfon; for while thefe charges, which for the prefent may be ftated againft him, are completely done away, matters are fo ordered that no future guilt fhall operate againft him to his condemnation. Thus the bleffing of juftification commences, and it neceffarily leads forwards to that other ingredient in it, an acceptance of the perfon as righteous.

Though with mankind a perfon may be pardoned that offence which he has committed, and fecured from thofe evil confequences to which he was in confequence fubjected; yet it is not ufual, nor does it thence follow, that he is at the fame time reftored to that character and condition which he formerly held. The fact is quite the reverse. But though it be thus with mankind, who are very limited in their favours, it is not fo with God, who is a rock, and whole work is perfect. When and where he forgives iniquity, then and there he accepts the perfon as righteous. And it is impoffible that matters can be otherwife; for while there can be no middle character or ftate of perfons with God, in acquitting from guilt, he materially and infantly does fo formally, pronounces the perfon to be righteous in his fight; both fentences, or rather both parts of the fame fentence, proceeding upon the fame fubftantial ground. This acceptance of the perfon as righteous, is not the making a perfon righteous by a real inherent change from fin to holinefs, in which the nature of fandification confifts; it is the aft of a judge in his judicial capacity, afcertaining the prefent ftate of a perfon, formally accepting, accounting, and adjudging him

to be righteous; investing him with a complete, an indefeasible title to all saving and spiritual blessings, and this upon grounds in every respect sufficient for the purpose: for while forgiveness of sins is solely through that propitiation which our Lord Jesus Christ rendered for them; so an acceptance of the person as righteous, proceeds upon the footing of his perfect obedience. It is thus that any are constituted righteous.

This sentence can only proceed upon the footing of an absolutely perfect righteousness; for none can be sustained by the law and the glorious law-giver as righteous, but those who are in possession of such a righteousness. In regard all are guilty, unrighteous, and also are unequal to the working out a righteousness for themselves, it is therefore clear that this sentence proceeds, and must proceed, upon the footing, not of a personal but an imputed righteousness, a righteousness without the law, provided by grace, and revealed by the gospel, even that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. And unless it had such a foundation to rest upon, it could never be realised in the experience of any. This righteousness as wrought out for them, though not wrought out by them, as exhibited in the gospel, with this view, in the exercise of a lively faith, is apprehended and pled upon before God as the ground of their absolution from guilt, and an acceptance of their persons as righteous; and this is a plea which the righteous Judge cannot but sustain as relevant, and impute as sufficient; and thus a sentence is produced in their favour to all that extent for which it is subservient: They are justified.

Justification in its nature then is a judicial acquittance from guilt, an acceptance of the person as righteous, and all this upon the solid ground of full satisfaction being rendered to law and justice,
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and an absolutely perfect righteousness presented and sustained to this end. It is a sentence pronounced by God himself, whose alone prerogative this is. "It is God that justifieth." It is through faith, this grace being eminently instrumental when matters are brought to this happy issue. It is an immediate instantaneous act completed at once, and which when pronounced needs not again be renewed or repeated. It is absolutely unalterable. Those who are justified, can never afterwards become unrighteous; for they are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

6. Adoption is another blessing which belongs to salvation, and which specially deserves our consideration. The apostle John gloried in this as a most distinguishing privilege, and which had most desirable consequences annexed to it. "Behold," says he, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." All are by nature children of wrath, heirs of hell, and of their father the devil; they are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But when saved with an everlasting salvation, such become the children of God, they are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of sons.

Those whom God justifies he also adopts for his children, that they may enjoy all the blessings of grace, and the unknown riches of glory, not only by the favour of friendship, though that be of the noblest kind, but also by the indisputable right of inheritance, which right they have in virtue of adoption. The word *adoption* signifies that act by which

which a person takes the child of another man, not related to him, into the place, and intitles him to the privileges of his own son. In the Grecian and Roman states, it was customary for a man of wealth, in default of issue from his own body, to make choice of some person upon whom he put his name, requiring him to relinquish his own family, and never to return to it again, and to proclaim him publicly his heir. The person thus adopted was legally intituled to the inheritance upon the decease of his adopter; and though before he was entirely void of all claim to such a benefit, or any expectation of it, was invested with the same privilege as if he had been born an heir to his benefactor. Accordingly, that spiritual and divine adoption which we now speak of as belonging to salvation, is God's gracious admission of strangers and aliens into the state, relation, and enjoyment of all the privileges of children through Jesus Christ, according to that glorious promise of the new covenant, 2 Cor. vi. 18. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." He puts his name upon them, requires them to forget their own people and their father's house, and thus makes them his children, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, or, as some render it, joint-heirs of Christ, and so of all things with and through him.

Such are not merely considered as, but they are actually made, the children of God. They are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. They are born from above, are born of God, and are made after his image; they are endowed with the disposition of sons, and are invested with an indefeasible title to the heavenly inheritance. Their privileges in this respect are truly great and important;

important; for, as being the children of God, Jehovah is their God and Father, Jesus is their brother, and they his brethren, according to what is stated, John, xx. 17. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Nothing can exceed the riches and glory of that inheritance to which, in virtue of their adoption, they have a right. It includes all the blessings of grace here, and the full fruition of glory hereafter. "All things are theirs, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." Christ is theirs, and God is theirs; and what portion more enlarged or extensive can be proposed? Yet such honour, such happiness, have all those who are made partakers of this salvation; for to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," John, i. 12.

7. Sanctification is another capital article in that salvation which a gracious God vouchsafes. Some do not distinguish betwixt regeneration, sanctification, and glorification, but consider them as one and the same blessing, in its varied progress, representing its commencement, gradual advance, and final consummation. But we apprehend, though they are inseparably connected, have a near relation to each other, and in their collective capacity serve in so far to constitute the expressive term *salvation*; yet it is as proper to view them under the notion of distinct blessings, in regard there is something peculiar to each, which lays a sufficient foundation for such distinction. Thus, regeneration strictly considered is only the formation of the new man in all its members and faculties, the receiving habitual grace, the infusion and implantation of gracious habits and principles in the soul; whereas

whereas, sanctification in its nature is that liveness, that spiritual motion, activity, and exertion, which follows upon regeneration. It is the person acting in his new character and capacity. It is the actual improvement and exercise of those gracious habits and principles which have been implanted in agreeableness to their nature, and in a subserviency to those ends for which they were given. But as this exercise and improvement while in this imperfect state is dull and defective, what has neither a becoming vigour nor exactness belonging to it; accordingly, glorification is the person's attaining to the perfection of the blessing, to such an exercise and improvement of those habits and principles as has neither flaw nor failure, but is with the fullest vigour, and with the most entire conformity that is competent to finite capacities. And besides, this points out to us not only a perfection of exercise, but also of enjoyment; for when vouchsafed, the person is admitted to fulness of joy and pleasures evermore, which are at God's right hand; so that when matters are duly considered, there is clearly a distinction betwixt these blessings, though they are nearly related, and infallibly follow upon each other.

As to the blessing of sanctification, which we are now attending to, this in its nature, as has been alleged, is the actual improvement and exercise of those gracious principles and habits which have been implanted. It consists of two parts, mortification and vivification; in other words, a dying daily unto sin, a living unto righteousness, the old man of corruption having received his death's wounds in regeneration, which will at length issue in final dissolution and utter extermination. In sanctification, there is a gradual exertion to the having matters brought to this issue, a daily and continued departure from and warfare against sin; there

there is a mortifying the deeds of the body, a crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. And as this is the case on the one hand, so, on the other, in regard the new man of grace has received its existence in regeneration, which must at length arrive at the stature of perfection. In sanctification there is no less attention employed, and vigour exerted, that matters may in due time be brought to this happy issue; and so there is not merely the having a new heart, a right spirit in the person, but also a walking in God's statutes and judgements; a walking after the Spirit, a living soberly, righteously, and godly, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts: and you will observe, that the greater progress persons make in this work, the nearer they advance to perfection, the more conformity will there be to the law of Christ, in which the essence of holiness consists.

This sanctification, as it originates from, so it is maintained and promoted by union to Jesus and communion with him. Without this no right or real progress can be made. It is in its nature a continued improvement of and conformity to Christ: Says Jesus, "Without me ye can do nothing. Abide in me, for the branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." It is carried on by means of the word. Hence Jesus prayed concerning his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And he also declared, "Ye are clean, through the words which I have spoken unto you." To the same purpose is what you have stated by the apostles Peter and Paul, 2 Cor. vii. 1.; 1 Pet. i. 22.; 2 Pet. i. 4. In one word, it is the work of almighty power and divine grace, by which the image of sin and Satan is defaced and destroyed, and the image of God is restored and renewed upon the soul, in an heavenly

ly temper, an humble walk, and an holy conversation.

8. Peace is another most important and comprehensive blessing. This is peculiar to the saved by grace; for till a person is interested in this salvation, he must be wholly estranged from all experience in regard to it. There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked. He has not either God at peace with him, or is he reconciled to or at peace with God. He knows nothing of that calm tranquillity, that peaceful serenity of mind, which is expressed by peace of conscience. Every thing is either in a state of perfect darkness, insensibility, and security, or else there is a prodigious uproar, with such a fearful disquietude and anxiety arising from a sense of guilt, as nothing can allay. But with those that are saved with an everlasting salvation, there is the enjoyment of peace in all the extent of the expression. "Being justified by faith, such have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." They have God at peace with them. He is pacified towards them notwithstanding all that they have done. All grounds of quarrel and controversy which he had against them are for ever done away. His heart is set in him with kindness to do them good, and to bless for evermore. He has the most entire affection for, and complacency in them. His being at peace with such not only intimates that he has no enmity against them, but also that he has the greatest good-will and kindness for and towards them; and therefore he expressly engages, that he will surely do them good.

But as God is at peace with them, so they are reconciled to and at peace with him; their enmity is overcome; the weapons of their warfare are laid aside; they are brought to a delighting in the law of the Lord after the inward man, are reconciled to his providential and gracious dispensations, and

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hence aim at a cordial subjection to them. As a consequence of and connected with all this, there is peace of conscience, which consists in that quietness, composure, tranquillity, and serenity of mind, which is enjoyed in all cases and events, and under every prospect; that possessing the soul in patience, that fixedness of heart with which a conscience purified with the blood of Jesus is acquainted; so that there is not, at least need not be, the least uneasiness or disquietude whatever. Though mountains should be cast into the midst of the sea, and the earth removed, though an host should encamp against them; yet such may be fearless. They are kept in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on God.

Peace with all creatures both animate and inanimate, so that no injury can be derived from them, is also the privilege of the saved by grace, and a part of that salvation which they enjoy. The Lord makes "a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground." They shall be in league with the stones of the field. When a man's ways please the Lord, even his very enemies are at peace with him. No evil shall befall him, nor plague come nigh his dwelling. Such is the comprehensive nature of this blessing; but comprehensive as it is, it is notwithstanding a part of that salvation which is proposed to us in the gospel, and to the enjoyment of which we are all made welcome. This is "the word which God sent to Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

9. Victory over all enemies, and final perseverance, an enduring to the end, are distinguished parts of that salvation which a gracious God vouchsafes. Those interested in it have their hearts not only filled with that joy and peace which is in believing; they are not merely in safety from every enemy,

enemy, and may possess themselves in patience under every prospect, but they are still more highly privileged; they shall overcome at length, nay, shall be more than conquerors. Though they have enemies, and a multitude of them, who are both mighty and malevolent, yet there is not the smallest ground for uneasy apprehensions; no evil can arise to them from this quarter, but the greatest good. They indeed at times may be foiled and beat back by their enemies, when the onset is vigorous, and their strength is weak; but they shall still maintain the warfare, till in their turn they foil and beat them back: and they are enabled to improve the advantages which they obtain with such skill and address, with such firmness and fortitude, that they cease not till the conquest is rendered complete, and victory is indisputably decided in their favour. This is what is ardently desired, and eagerly pressed after. A partial advantage is what will not either satisfy the Christian soldier, or be sufficient to his peace and quietness. There is a mutual irreconcilable hatred and opposition which subsists betwixt him and his enemies; and therefore the conflict can never be terminated, or quietness fully enjoyed, till complete ruin befall the one or the other. Accordingly the Christian, as in fact the stronger party, however weak at times he seems, is enabled in due time to bring matters to an happy issue in his own favour. His name is Gad, and therefore, though a troop now and then overcomes, he at length triumphs completely over all his enemies, however numerous and however mighty. He triumphs over sin, and the lusts of his own heart. "Through the Spirit he mortifies the deeds of the body," "his members that are on the earth." "The law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus, makes free from the law of sin and death." He triumphs over the world

through faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith terminating upon spiritual and unseen blessings, gives such an important reality and sweetness to them, that every thing that this world affords, when put into competition with these, shrinks into its native insignificance. In short, he triumphs over Satan, his grand adversary, with all his auxiliaries and associates; he is at any rate a vanquished enemy, and the God of peace at length bruises him completely, and lays him wholly under the Christian's feet; he thus obtains the mastery of his foes, however much for a time they may distress and disturb. The victory indeed is for a season partial; the conquest is gradual, mysterious, and often difficult, so that it is scarcely obtained, and it is not well known how; but it is certain, and will at last, without peradventure, be full and complete. "The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death, and death shall be swallowed up in victory."

But as they shall obtain victory over their enemies, so they shall be privileged with final perseverance, an enduring to the end. This is a more enlarged blessing than even the other. It points out not only a steady unremitted opposition to enemies, which at last issues in complete victory over them, but also denotes an uninterrupted unceasing continuance in that state of grace and enjoyment to which these have been advanced. It also includes under it a progress-making in that course which they have been put on; so as that though sometimes the progress be more and sometimes less rapid, though it may often not be at all discernible, yet there is always a holding on; though there may sometimes be a turning aside, yet there is never a going back; though there is too often a fainting, yet there is never a final giving up. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is
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"of clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." He is strengthened with strength inwardly, and is thus kept in safety. The undoubted certainty of this being the case at all times, is without peradventure a most invaluable blessing. Were not this what we were warranted to depend upon, the enjoyment of any other blessing, however valuable and desirable in itself, yet could not be much accounted of, or greatly relished, while we were obliged to view our tenure of it as precarious and uncertain.

Perseverance then must unquestionably be a part of that salvation which God bestows, as otherwise it could not be worthy of him, or desirable by us; and as indispensably necessary, so it really is the case. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance." "Whosoever is born of God," cannot see death or destruction; "for his seed remaineth in him." When once persons are planted in the house of God, and made members of his family, they go no more out, but continue, however imperceptible, planted in the courts of our God: They still hold on; "they go from strength to strength, till they at length arrive before the Lord in Zion:" They are like trees planted by the rivers of water, which in their season yield their fruit; their leaves do not wither: all that they do shall prosper. — We do not say, that they never turn aside, or walk unworthy of their character, are never wanting in a becoming attention to their duty. Alas! this is far from being the case. Iniquity too often prevails in and over them, which occasions, or at least should occasion much grief of heart. But though this be, yet notwithstanding they still hold on; for it is not themselves in their new character and capacity that are thus chargeable, but sin that dwelleth in them; and as being under the guidance of infinite wisdom,

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almighty power, and boundless grace, it is impossible they can ever fail: they must still be in the right way, that way in which the Lord leadeth them, and shall at length arrive at the city of habitation: "They are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation." This honour have all his saints.

10. Glorification is the crowning part, or rather the perfection, the consummation of that salvation which is by grace. But what is this glorification do you say? What are we to understand by it? Without a blush we answer, We cannot tell! This will neither be properly understood nor ascertained by any, till it is matter of actual enjoyment. At the same time, though it is impossible to apprehend or express perfectly what this glorification is, yet in regard there are some hints in relation to it afforded us in the word of God, we by these may form some faint notions as to it; but faint these are, and must be, when compared with the perfect day, considering the darkness, the present limited nature of our capacities, and their attachment to earthly objects.

In general, then, glorification points out persons being rendered completely glorious, their being made perfectly blessed. *It is the attaining to a state of complete holiness and consummate happiness, in the immediate and uninterrupted vision and fruition of a Three-one God in Christ, Father, Son, and Spirit, in all their ever adorable and adored perfections.*

To assist our feeble and contracted minds in forming some faint notions as to this supreme blessedness, in the sacred volume it is compared to the most delightful and glorious things which come under our notice in this world: For instance, to denote the supereminent delights which are enjoyed, it is described as being with Christ in paradise, in allusion to the garden of Eden, where there was

a profusion of delights; and in like manner at God's right-hand there is fullness of joy and pleasures evermore. To signify the grand magnificence and glory which is then conferred, it is compared to the being invested with a kingdom, the having a crown of glory, which is also a crown of righteousness, put upon them. And to ascertain the perpetuity of enjoyment, it is represented as an everlasting kingdom, declared to be eternal life, and pointed out by a being ever with the Lord. That future happiness and glory which is the crowning part of salvation, may be considered in two points of view, either as it is enjoyed by the separate spirits before the resurrection and the last judgement, or by the soul and body when again united, after that awful period is come, and these grand events have been accomplished.

That the separate spirits of the saints are possessed of thought and consciousness, and that they enjoy ineffable bliss in communion with Jesus, their exalted head, are truths clearly taught in Scripture. Soon as that mysterious union which subsists between the soul and the body in the present state is dissolved by death, the soul being made perfectly free from the very being of sin, immediately enters into glory. That this is the case might easily be established. We shall only mention one proof, than which nothing can be stronger or more decisive; it is the gracious answer which Christ gave to the humble supplication of the thief on the cross. "To-day," said he, "thalt thou be with me in paradise." Besides, it is absolutely necessary that this should be; for the mind being a thinking substance, and which always must exercise consciousness, even when disunited from the body; it must be active in a state of enjoyment of one kind or other: and no state seems more competent to the spirits of just men made perfect, than that of being

being ever with the Lord. Hence the Apostle Paul was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, nevertheless to abide in the flesh was more needful for the Philippians: and in his circumstances there was far from being no difficulty; for while he had a fervent desire to glorify God on earth, so when absent from the body, he would be present with the Lord, which was far better: For the separate spirits of the saints being lodged in eternal mansions prepared for them before the world began, and abiding at the fountain-head of all blessedness, they enjoy inconceivable pleasures. Moral and penal evils of every kind are eternally banished from those bright abodes. The people that dwell there are all perfectly righteous. The inhabitants of that land can never say, I am sick: They are forgiven their iniquity: their garments are always white: their harps are ever strung, and pitched upon the highest key. Being with Christ, according to his promise, they behold his glory, are ravished with his beauty, and satisfied with his likeness: they are favoured with a more perfect knowledge of God than ever before, their capacities being vastly enlarged. They are admitted to the most intimate uninterrupted communion and fellowship with a Trinity of persons in the ever adorable Godhead; and their love, their affection for them, is proportionably heightened. In short, absolutely free from that pride and selfishness, which, while here, tarnished their best services, and wholly delivered from all those imperfections which attend them while in this militant state, the profoundest acknowledgements of their innumerable obligations to rich, sovereign, reigning grace, and the loftiest strains of thanksgiving to God and the Lamb, are their unceasing and sweet employ.

But though their happiness in this respect be truly

truly great, yet we apprehend it comes far short of that which shall be enjoyed by them in their whole persons, and which properly belongs to the consummation of salvation. If we consult the Scriptures we will find, that the blessedness of the saints will not be fully completed till the general judgment is past, and the end of the world has come. There are various things which are mentioned, besides those which are hid from us, which will certainly conduce to enhance their blessedness at that period. Their bodies will then be raised up in glory, re-united to their spirits, and rendered fit companions for their souls to all eternity, as being made capable of partaking in all the blessedness of the righteous. Their vile bodies shall be changed, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to that working by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. That which is sown a natural, shall be raised a spiritual body. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. But who can form adequate notions as to the nature and excellence of a spiritual body? The day will declare it. The beloved apostle, though of as quick and extensive discernment as any, yet was obliged to be silent upon this head, and to intimate that it doth not yet appear what we shall be in a glorified state. But this honour, incomprehensible as it is, have all the saints; and the enjoyment of it must greatly enlarge their blessedness; without it something would be wanting to the consummation of their joys.

Besides this, at the last day another thing which will in some measure contribute to the blessedness of the righteous, is their perfect and public acquittal, before an assembled world, pronounced by Jehovah Jesus, their judge, when sifted before this tribunal, and also their solemn investiture
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with, and introduction to that glorious inheritance and kingdom prepared for them. To those on the right hand of the sovereign Judge, he, with ineffable complacency, will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." And their blessedness thus heightened will be eternal: It is eternity stamped upon their enjoyments that gives them their high importance. Could they, when so exalted in bliss, ever apprehend or suppose an end to their happiness, however remote, this ghastly thought would drink up and embitter all their joys. But their inheritance is unalienable, their crown unfading, their kingdom an everlasting kingdom; their joy is full, and their pleasures are evermore, at God's right-hand, having been made pillars in the house of their God: they shall go no more out: God shall be their everlasting light; and their God their glory.*

— Such then is some faint representation of what we understand as comprehended under this crowning part of salvation, glorification; and, you will observe, where there is one part of salvation, there must, in due time, be the whole; for they all severally combine to the constitution of the important blessing "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate; whom he did predestinate, them he also called; whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also GLORIFIED."

* The greater part of this particular, and several sentiments in the 6th, are borrowed from a valuable treatise, *The Reign of Grace*, by the Reverend Abraham Booth, whose praise is deservedly in the churches.

S E R M O N XI.

EPHESIANS, ii. 5.

By grace ye are saved.

HAVING, in the preceding Discourse, descended upon some of the capital and leading articles of salvation, we proceed, as was proposed,

II. To illustrate and confirm the important truth contained in our text, viz. That salvation is by grace. And here, before being more particular, it is to be observed, that the term *grace* in Scripture admits of various acceptations. When connected with salvation, it either points out that everlasting love and free favour of God, which is the original source and spring of all spiritual blessings, or it denotes that divine energy which is vouchsafed, and which is necessary to the commencement, continuation, and consummation of every good word and work in the Christian; or it represents those glorious effects which result from both these, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. The term seems to be used in all these senses in one remarkable passage, 1 Cor 15. 10: "By the grace of God," says the apostle, "I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain: But I laboured more abundantly than

“than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” It is in the two first senses we apprehend the assertion of the apostle in our text is to be understood, as intimating to us, that that salvation which in the first fruits they enjoyed, and which in its perfection would, in due time, be their privilege, was wholly owing to grace; and this both as denoting that divine energy which was afforded, and also as pointing out the free love, the unmerited favour of God. — We shall endeavour to make this good in both views of the term. — We are accordingly,

1. To shew that salvation, in the several particulars condescended upon, and concluding from these in the whole of it, is and must be entirely the doing of the Lord, the effect of his powerful and gracious operations; and that therefore such as enjoy this comprehensive blessing do not derive it from themselves, or from any other quarter whatever, but are wholly indebted to the Lord for it; and that therefore in this view, with the fullest propriety, it may be said to be by grace.

1st, Election, which is the primary blessing, without question must be admitted as wholly of and from the Lord. This is so plain, that it needs not be insisted upon. When we consider the period at which this blessing commenced, and the nature of the blessing itself, we must be convinced that it is impossible that matters can be otherwise. This blessing is of an eternal nature, and had an existence long before the objects upon whom it did terminate were brought into being; and therefore they could not be active in its production. Besides, there is the grossest absurdity in the idea of a person's choosing himself; so that it is perfectly clear, that in this instance salvation is wholly the doing of the Lord. He claims it as his prerogative. “Ye have
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"not chosen me, but I have chosen you." It is no less evident,

2. That regeneration, which is next to election, is also of and from the Lord. The absurdity of supposing that persons are active in the production of their animal or moral life, will readily be admitted. There is however a still more palpable error and inconsistency in imagining, that we can by our exertions in any respect conduce to the existence of that spiritual life, and those spiritual principles, which are infused and implanted in regeneration. For in the animal and moral life which is enjoyed, there was no opposing or counteracting principle to overcome, before this was produced; and yet, though matters were so, we are, and of necessity must be, wholly inactive. Till once brought into being we are nothing, and nothing can produce nothing. But with regard to the spiritual life, and those spiritual principles which in regeneration are implanted, the matter was still more difficult. In this case there was not merely a want of every thing necessary to accomplish this, but also the most rooted aversion and enmity to its production. Hence the person in the production of the blessing, instead of being active, must be rendered inactive; that opposition and enmity which is in him must be destroyed, and he as it were reduced to the same state of nothingness and insignificancy he was in when he was endowed with animal life and moral powers: and till this is the case, he must be wholly estranged from acquaintance with the blessing. This being the genuine state of matters, it is easy to see that regeneration is wholly the doing of the Lord. It is expressly ascribed to him: We are said to be *born of God, born from above, born of the Spirit*, and to be *begotten of God*; all which expressions ascertain the point beyond a doubt.

It must in vain be alledged, that even after all the desolation that has befallen us, while persons have all the powers and faculties of the soul remaining, that accordingly it is possible and attainable, as the effect of their own exertions, an acquiring all those habits and principles which are said to be implanted in regeneration. If in regeneration there were not distinct, not to say opposite principles to what formerly were infused, but only a varied modification and exercise of those habits which were already in existence, there would be some colour and pretext for what is alledged: But viewing matters as they really are, there is not the smallest ground to proceed upon; there cannot be a vainer, a more absurd imagination. Can a clean thing proceed from an unclean? Can something, by a voluntary impulse, start out of nothing? Can a dead inactive mass of matter of its own accord, and by its own exertion, tend upward, in opposition to that principle of gravity which is essential to it? If so, then we who are in similar circumstances, may be considered as capable of activity in our regeneration, but not otherwise. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

3. Effectual calling is also clearly the work of the Lord, and by no means the doing of the creature. Neither the person's self, nor any other creature by their exertions, are capable of bringing it about. True it is, that instruments are usually employed in the work; but these could accomplish nothing were they alone. Hence the distinction betwixt the external call common to all under the dispensation of

of the gospel, and the inward call of the Spirit, which is denominated effectual. Both these in respect of the instruments differ not. What with some is only external, with others is that effectual call which is unto salvation. The abilities of the most accomplished are not sufficient for the latter, while the meanest talents may be equal for the former. Moral suasion, and warm addresses, may at times amuse and kindle a false heat, may even produce a temporary compliance with what is urged, but in itself can make no lasting impression.

We are far from thinking, or would we insinuate, that warm addresses upon serious subjects are in themselves improper; for persons should never be more interested than when attending to these. But then every person has his own gift, and every work its peculiar season. An awkward, affected, and uniform warmth, is certainly disgusting to a serious mind; and at any rate, when much of this prevails, it is not without its danger, being calculated to produce false affections, and so a false experience in religion: it leads to regard the instrument more than the great worker; and the person is thus gradually brought to be more under the influence of sound than sense. The Lord is so peremptory in having his own room in his work, that he often chooses the foolish things of the world, the things that are not as his instruments, that no flesh may glory in his presence. It is a remarkable passage you have, and which is to the present purpose, 1 Kings, xix. 11. where we have an account of the Lord's appearance to Elijah. There was a great and strong wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but the Lord was not in these remarkable appearances; but after the fire there was a still small voice, and by it the Lord manifested himself; which in our view intimates, that the Lord's gracious dealings

are ordinarily in a secret and silent, though irresistible manner; for the kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Effectual calling is without question the doing of the Lord. He opens the ear to instruction, and the heart to receive knowledge. By the power of his Spirit, and the efficacy of his grace, he enters into hearts, makes room for himself there; he unlocks those bolts, and removes those bars, which shut out himself and the offers of his grace; he has the key of David, and hence effectually captivates the heart to the obedience of faith; he speaks as never man spake; his word is with power; he sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, and in his day of power makes willing: and were he not to do this, no such thing could ever be realised in the experience of any. If then you would wish to have experience of this blessing, you must seek and look for it from God alone; for he it is that chooses and causes persons to hear his voice, and to obey it.

4. Repentance also is to be considered in the same light. This, though a duty indispensably incumbent upon us, is what we cannot attain to of ourselves, or can it be brought about by the utmost exertions of finite capacities. There is indeed a kind of repentance with which persons may be acquainted, which is acquired by the exercise of our natural powers in concurrence with other circumstances; but this, where-ever it is, so far from being either our privilege or our duty, is at once our sin and our misery, and has often a direful issue. Of this kind was that repentance to which Judas attained, and you know to what it brought him.

That repentance which is unto life, is and must be the doing of the Lord. When genuine, it is the effect of divine power, and proceeds from a rich display of sovereign grace. As it is unto life, so it must be from life; and this not merely from the
existence

existence of spiritual life in persons, but also from its present, its continued exercise; and in order to all this, the Lord, the Spirit, must work. We are so attached to sin, and so enfeebled by it, that of ourselves we are both unable and unwilling to give up with it, either in the love or practice; so that there cannot be genuine evangelical repentance, but what proceeds from him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. In proof of this we may appeal to the testimony of Scripture, and the experience of the saints in every period. The Lord does nothing in vain; his gracious promises are all of them accommodations to our necessities: but repentance is a promised blessing, as you see, Zech. xii. 10. and promised as the effect of an abundant out-pouring of the Holy Spirit; nay, through the whole of the Scripture, if impartially examined, it is represented as an exercise which when attained is in every instance owing to the Divine interposition in the person's behalf. Thus, Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18. 19. when left to his own exertions, he could accomplish nothing that was acceptable or satisfying; and therefore, as was incumbent, he has recourse to God, who alone was equal to the work; and no sooner did he interpose than the work became easy and pleasant, but otherwise it was impracticable.

It is a believing view of sin as pardoned, and of God as pacified towards the person, a spiritual discernment of the beauty of holiness, and the deformity of sin, and a discovery of the exceeding riches of that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ, that effectually produces evangelical repentance; but to afford those sights, to invest them with that efficacy which they have, and to bring matters to this desirable issue, is not work competent to creatures; and therefore it becomes us to give to the Lord the glory that is his due;

to honour him as the author and finisher of this exercise.

5. It must also hold, that justification is of and from the Lord. This in all the extent of the expression is unquestionable. Viewing justification as containing under it freedom from guilt, and an acceptance of the person as righteous, yet still it is and must be considered as the doing of the Lord. There is no one who has proper authority to invest with those blessings but Jehovah himself; he is the only Lawgiver who can save and who can destroy, who can confer or with-hold any blessing. The Pharisees spoke well, whatever their intention was, when they said, Who can forgive sins but God only? Sin is an evil which properly strikes against God himself, as being a rebellion against his law, an insult offered to the whole of his perfections; of course it can only belong to him to absolve and acquit the guilty transgressor. And we may add, that not only is it the province and prerogative of Jehovah to forgive sin, but also it is he, and he only, who is capable of vouchsafing the blessing. Were it with men or angels that we had to deal, we could never become possessed of it. Even though they had full authority to pronounce this sentence in our favour, they by no means could be reconciled to a doing it, considering the multiplied number, the heinous nature, and the peculiar aggravations of those transgressions which they would have to forgive. But infinite love, boundless grace, finds this an easy matter. In God compassions flow, he is rich in mercy and ready to forgive; and without this were the case, no such blessing could ever be experienced.

It also belongs to him to declare righteous. The apostle is clearly of these sentiments. Says he, Rom. viii. "It is God that justifieth." It is he only who has sufficient authority, and is duly qualified
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for this business; he only was capable of devising and rendering fully effectual a method by which ungodly sinners could be justified: Besides, there is certainly no one but the Lawgiver himself, or one empowered by him, that can pronounce any righteous; and as he only has authority, so there is no one but himself who has a discernment equal to an ascertaining the real state of matters with persons in relation to his law, so as that they in justice may be pronounced righteous. And while this is the case, it is no less undoubted that it was competent only to that infinite wisdom of which he is possessed, to devise a method by which ungodly sinners could be justified, to propose and render transferable to them a righteousness, which, though not wrought out by them, yet as wrought out for them, and of infinite value in itself, was every way sufficient for such a sentence being pronounced in their favour. And as the devising, so the rendering effectual this method, was entirely owing to him. That faith which is the great instrument on the sinner's part, is his work; and he not only produces it in the habit, but also draws it forth to proper exercise. In short, the sustaining the plea of faith as relevant, the imputing as sufficient in the person's favour to his being constituted righteous, is clearly his doing, and is the prerogative of no other; so that this blessing is wholly of, from, and through him.

6. Adoption must also be considered in the same light. This is so obvious, that it would be improper to spend much time in enlarging upon it. It is an evident absurdity, the supposition that a person is capable of adopting himself, placing himself in a relation to another, while the existence of that relation wholly depends upon the will and pleasure of that other person, as is the case in adoption with man. The same must hold as to that spiritual and divine adoption of which we now speak. The person

person thus favoured, neither is nor can be active in the act of adoption; this is wholly of the Lord, the effect of his sovereign will and pleasure. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;" John, i. 12. "That being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" Titus, iii. 7. Their actual improvement of this blessing, their acquiescence in this relation, this also is of and from him. Though they are active, and exert themselves when thus exercised, yet their activity is not of or by themselves, but is the work of the Spirit of adoption as sent into their hearts to this end. It is through his influences and operations that they cry, Abba, Father; he both directs, determines, and enables, to all that right exercise which in this instance is exhibited by any: "Thou shalt call me, my Father; and shalt not turn away from me." "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

7. Sanctification without question must be considered as the work of God. Not only is that power and capacity, those gracious habits and principles which are afforded in regeneration, of and from the Lord the Spirit; but also the improvement of these is no less owing to and dependent upon him than the implantation. Were he not powerfully to excite and draw forth those gracious principles into exercise, they would remain inactive and unprofitable with persons. It is only in so far as he is present in and working for persons, is drawing them, that there can either be a dying to sin or a living to righteousness. Thus the apostle, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live:" And the church, "Draw me, we will run after thee:" The Psalmist, "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou

"thou shalt enlarge my heart;" intimating, that the one was indispensably necessary to the other, so necessary that its existence actually depended upon it. The disposition, the ability for every good word and work, must be produced in persons, otherwise they will never work to any good purpose. This is the case not merely in some instances, but in every instance whatever. The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, expressly testified to his disciples, "Without me," i. e. without a vital union to and continued communion with me in the sanctifying influences of my Spirit and grace, "ye can do nothing." "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." This is so undoubted, that the fact as to all is, that of themselves they cannot so much as think a good thought, much less speak aright, or perform duty acceptably.

The apostle, who was already in part sanctified, and who had as solid ground for boasting as any ever had, yet he, notwithstanding, most readily admits and acknowledges his insufficiency: Says he, 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Nor is he singular in these sentiments; all the saints mentioned in Scripture uniformly accord with him: Hence their varied breathings after the divine presence with them, his blessing upon them, the continued communication of his Spirit and grace to them; a plain evidence, and this often as plainly expressed, that in themselves they were weak and could do nothing, but as strengthened by the mighty God of Jacob; that it was not merely necessary that they should be set on the right way, but also they must be continually upheld by him, carried forward in their course, guided by his counsel, guarded by his providence, and supported by his Spirit and presence; for in this way alone they could finish their warfare

fare to his glory and their own comfort. Accordingly all that the saints ever do is not in their view their own doing, however much it may appear to be so, but the grace of God in them, the working of his mighty power by them, as the apostle expresses the matter.

In farther evidence of sanctification being of and from the Lord, we have the blessing in Scripture represented as not simply the work of one person in the adorable Trinity, but also as graciously proceeding from all the three persons severally, who condescendingly unite and harmonize in its production. Jude addresses his epistle "to them that are sanctified by God the Father." Christ declared to his disciples, "ye are clean, through the words that I have spoken unto you." And the apostle expressly avers, that "both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." And there is explicit mention made of the sanctification of the Spirit in a variety of places; so that the fact is most unquestionable. But while we consider, and ought to consider sanctification as the work of God, we are not to forget that the person is by no means altogether passive in the business: he is an instrument in the hand of the great worker. The Holy Spirit works in and by him. There must therefore be an exertion, an activity on his part, without which matters will not go forward. Hence these exhortations: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."—"Follow after holiness; without which no man shall see the Lord." Which clearly intimates, that, apart from every other consideration, persons are under obligations to improve those gracious principles which have been implanted in them; and which were given them, not that they might be laid up in a napkin, but that they might be to the praise

praise and glory of their great Author. If we would act a proper part, we should exert ourselves as if we were capable of doing all; and yet, which may seem to be a contradiction, while, in our view, it is proper language on this subject, so exert ourselves, as if we were capable of nothing whatever: for this in fact will be the case, if the Lord is not with us of a truth, working in us both to will and to do, commanding our strength in every instance; and therefore the glory of all is ever due to him.

8. It must be admitted, that peace with God, and peace of conscience, proceed entirely from him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. It was altogether beyond the reach of finite capacities to have devised or rendered effectual a method through which God, the just God, might be pacified and reconciled towards guilty rebels. This could only be produced by infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless grace. Wisdom dwelt with prudence, and found out the knowledge of this witty invention. And as the method of God's being at peace with us, had of necessity to originate from himself, so our being reconciled to and at peace with him, is no less his doing. As the one flows from, and is founded upon the other, so by his Spirit he both subdues the natural enmity of the heart, and reconciles the person to the method of salvation, to that rule and government which he must exercise in and over all those that are his children; and unless he were to do so, they would never attain to any such experience. Those who have this as their privilege will readily acknowledge thus much.

Peace of conscience is also entirely owing to and dependent upon the Lord; for while the ground, the foundation upon which it rests, is with and from him, that improvement of it in the exercise

of a lively faith, to which any are brought forward, is his doing. It is he alone that can speak peace; and when he does so, there will be peace. — His word is with power: — He maketh the storm a calm. — The blood of Jesus sprinkled upon the conscience has a most pacifying influence: it is every way sufficient to allay that distress and disturbance which a deep sense of aggravated guilt has produced; it speaketh better things than that of Abel's. And as the Lord introduces to the enjoyment of this blessing, so he cherishes it and maintains it. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." And as peace in all these respects must come from God, so in every other instance whatever. He is the God of peace: he blesses his people with peace; and there can be no genuine peace but as it is from and by him.

9. Victory over enemies, and final perseverance, are blessings which unquestionably are and must be the work of God. While it holds true in general, that of ourselves we can do nothing, it is still more undoubted, that we are unequal to the task of commencing or maintaining the Christian warfare, and much more to bring it to a comfortable issue at last. Our enemies are numerous, are mighty, are subtle, and they are implacable. Of ourselves we are unable to go forth against them. Were we to attempt it, we soon would feel the dire effects of our imprudence, in being overwhelmed by them. The meanest foe is more than a match for the strongest, who in himself is not only weak, but altogether without strength. Besides, matters are even in worse circumstances than this; not only is there an inability for the warfare, there is also an utter aversion to it: and accordingly with any, while in their natural estate, so far from possessing a disposition for commencing or maintaining this warfare

fare with a view to its terminating favourably, there is too strong an inclination to confederate with their enemies, to submit to them, however opposite this be both to duty and interest. In these circumstances it is altogether impossible, if it in the least depends upon us, that victory can ever be decided as in our favour. This, as well as other blessings, must be the doing of the Lord. It is he alone that can bring matters to an happy issue. By the power of his spirit and the efficacy of his grace, he engages the person in the spiritual warfare; grants him a spiritual discernment of his true interest, and his malicious foes; stirs him up to watch over the one, and to exert himself in opposition to the other. He enlists him under the banner of the glorious Captain of Salvation, and determines him to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He furnishes him completely for the warfare, invests him with the whole armour of God. He guides him by his counsel, and he girds him with strength for the battle. He teaches his hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by his arms. He enables him to pursue his enemies, and to overtake them; nor does he turn from them till they are wholly subdued under his feet. But were not the Lord to do all this for the Christian, matters would never have such a favourable appearance or issue with him. Accordingly, when a proper account is made of this blessing, the glory of it will be given to God as his due. Thus the Psalmist, Ps. xviii. and xlv; Rev. iv. 10. xii. 10.

In like manner final perseverance, an enduring to the end, must be traced to the same almighty power and grace. When we consider the difficulties with which the Christian has to struggle, the dangers to which he stands exposed, the enemies with which he has to conflict, the duties he has to discharge, the great work and warfare he has to accomplish;

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accomplish; and at the same time contemplate what the best in themselves are, less than nothing and vanity; there certainly cannot be an hesitation in the smallest degree upon this point. Perseverance is a work so much superior to what creatures are capable of, that it would be the height of presumption once to admit the possibility of its being brought about by their feeble exertions. Such a blessing would never be realized in the experience of any, were not the unchangeable covenant, the unalterable promise and oath of Jehovah, engaged to make it good; were not almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless grace exerted in bringing it about. It is owing to divine faithfulness, as pledged to this end, to that spiritual and ineffable union which subsists betwixt Christ and believers, to that intimate and unceasing communion which flows from this union, to the infinite value and efficacy of his obedience to death, to his all-powerful and ever prevalent intercession as founded upon his obedience, and to the gracious inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in persons. It is, we say, owing to and dependent upon all these, that this blessing can be ever realized in the experience of any; and therefore it is clear that it is wholly of and from the Lord. Were the Christian in any case, even the easiest, left wholly to himself, matters would soon be marred. The Lord's hand and presence must ever be with and upon him, otherwise he cannot be safe. Hence it is that the Lord's absence is so much deprecated, and his presence so ardently desired by his people; his power and presence being so indispensably necessary to their being kept in the right way.—“Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” The apostle informs us, that those who are in safety, are “kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.”

"tion." Being chosen to salvation, they were given to Christ to be by him redeemed: they were thus committed to his trust. He accordingly makes them to taste of his goodness in the first fruits, exercises a continued care and concern in relation to them, and at length presents them without blame before him in love.—Of all that were given him he loses none:—None can pluck them out of his hand; and Christ being in the Father, and they in him, this is an additional security for the blessing: For the Father which gave them is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of his hands.

In the *last* place, There is certainly the most sufficient reason for the conclusion, that glorification is wholly of and from the Lord. If, in the preceding parts of salvation, finite power and wisdom has been found altogether unequal to their production, it without question must be admitted, that there is a still greater incapacity for the consummation of salvation; which, in the nature of things, must comprehend an higher display of power and wisdom than has before been exhibited; so high and enlarged as can neither be conceived nor expressed by us. In ordinary buildings among men, it is usually the nicest artist that puts the finishing hand to the structure, so as that a sort of beauty may appear throughout the whole; and therefore, in this view, this part of the work must be peculiar to him who alone is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. But the spiritual building differs exceedingly from all human works, and specially in this, that the whole is the doing of the Lord. His hand is not merely at some parts of the building, and not at others, but is continually engaged in working; for it cannot advance a single inch forwards but as carried on by him. The hands of Zerubabel

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having laid the foundation, his hands shall also finish it.

It is, however, to be observed, that there are some parts of the building where his work more eminently appears than in others; and certainly this may be specially said of the consummation of it in glorification. He in this most eminently displays the depths of his wisdom, the greatness of his power, the riches of his grace, and, in short, the inconceivable glory of all his other perfections. In the rearing up of this building, he condescends to make use of instruments: But, in regard no one is equal, even as an instrument, to the work of putting the finishing hand to the spiritual building, he takes this entirely upon himself; and it is owing to this circumstance, that the building enjoys that perfection of beauty, which is at last diffused over all its several parts. "He shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to that working by which he is able to subdue all things to himself."

Thus we have seen that salvation, in the several capital articles we have condescended upon, is clearly the doing of the Lord, and in no respect merely the work of the creature; and we apprehend the same conclusion with equal justice may be made as to all the other parts of this comprehensive blessing; and therefore there is the most sufficient ground afforded for admitting the propriety of what is here stated, in the first view we have taken of it—*By grace ye are saved.*

II. We now go on, as was proposed, to show, that salvation, in the several capital articles, and so in the whole of its extent, is entirely owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God; that nothing on the part of the sons of men was or could be a meritorious cause of the blessing; and that therefore,

fore, in this view of the expression, the assertion of the apostle is most undoubted, *By grace ye are saved.*—To begin then,

1. It is clear that election was entirely owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God, as terminating upon its objects. This must necessarily be granted, if the matter is attentively and impartially considered. It must either have proceeded in this way, or it must be influenced either by some original intrinsic worthiness in its objects, or by some after acquirement, which would distinguish them from others, and which, as foreseen, produced this effect. But neither of these last was in fact the case. If we faithfully consult the sacred volume, our only infallible guide in this matter, we will soon be convinced that the objects of this blessing, when thus distinguished, neither had, nor could have, any intrinsic worthiness belonging to them. When chosen, instead of being better than others, were it possible, it would rather seem that as to multitudes the direct reverse was the fact. At any rate, as to all, it is evident they were in possession of no amiableness or excellence whatever which could influence this distinction; they were viewed as a part of the same undistinguished mass of corruption. It was when foreseen as lying in their blood, wallowing in their filth, as abominable outcasts, that divine sovereignty and love said unto them, *Live.*

And as no intrinsic worth in the creature did or could operate to their being thus favoured, it is equally certain that any foreseen after acquirement which in due time they might possess, had no influence, even the smallest, in their election? All that holiness, and those good works for which those who are chosen in due time are distinguished, so far from these, as foreseen, having influence to produce this blessing; on the contrary, it is from
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their election, as the grand source, that the whole of that holiness, and those good works which are with any, do flow. The existence of these in all their extent being a special object in view, a design to be accomplished by it; of course they could have no influence whatever towards its existence, for nothing can be a cause of itself. In proof of what is stated, we may refer particularly to Rom. viii. 29. ix. 11. 13. 15. 16. Eph. i. 4.—7. 2 Thes. ii. 13. In all which, and many other places, what we have alledged is sufficiently established. Election then is a blessing which neither arises from any original intrinsic worthiness in its objects, nor is it in the smallest degree influenced by any after acquirement as foreseen, which distinguishes these from others; of course it must follow, that Jehovah in this instance acts as a sovereign. Without regard to any thing in the sons of men; he displays the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them through Christ Jesus.

The apostle, Rom. xi. 5. 6. in direct terms, avows this doctrine. While he peremptorily asserts election to be of grace, owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God; he insists that it must be wholly so, entirely independent of its objects. It must either be of works, and so an act of remunerative justice, or it must be entirely of grace, to the utter exclusion of works as done by the creature. These are so opposite in their nature, that they can never unite in promoting the same design. For “if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”

2. It must also be admitted, that regeneration is entirely owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God. This is obvious. Man, by sin, having defaced the divine image, and destroyed him-
self,

self, it behoved to be entirely an act of absolute sovereignty, a display of rich grace, the having renewed and restored that image in the experience of any. There neither were nor could be any inducements with mankind to bring forward the divine operations in this instance, but much to restrain them. There was nothing amiable or inviting in the creature, which by sin was rendered an entire mass of corruption. And it is farther to be recollected, that persons are so far from being active in the accomplishment of the blessing, and so having some influence towards it, that on the contrary there is the utmost opposition and aversion with them as to their enjoyment of it. The whole therefore is the doing of the Lord, the effect of the exceeding greatness of his power, and a rich display of his sovereignty and grace. This is evident both from the nature of things, and also from what we are taught in Scripture; particularly, James, i. 18.

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." Titus, iii. 5. *"Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

3. Effectual calling, in like manner, is without question owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God. This will appear beyond a doubt, if we consider that it is entirely the work of God; that in working he acts as an absolute sovereign, and that those whom he calls are by no means distinguished by any inherent good qualities, but often are in circumstances quite the reverse. That this is the work of God, has already been illustrated. The least attention to the matter will soon convince us, that in this work he acts, and must act, as an absolute sovereign; he is, he can be, under no obligations independent of himself thus to favour. Instead

stead of calling any to return to him from the evil of their ways, he in justice might have suffered the whole of mankind to have departed from him, till he had utterly consumed them. His interposition in behalf of any must therefore be an act of absolute sovereignty and rich grace; the more so if we recollect, that when persons are thus privileged, as they do not deserve the blessing, so they are not desiring it, or making any inquiries after it. He is found of them that seek him not, he manifests himself to them that are not asking after him. No reason other can be assigned for this part of the divine conduct than this, because so it seemed good in his sight. To demonstrate the sovereignty of his procedure in this instance, he takes one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to himself. He passes by, and leaves eternally to perish, some who in human reckoning, and indeed in a comparative view, are less criminal than those whom he causes to approach unto him, and calls effectually by his grace; nay, that no flesh might glory in his presence, we are assured that it is persons who are lying in their blood to whom Jehovah says, live. It is those that are dead whom he quickens; it is the blind he causes to see, the deaf he makes to hear; it is to the prisoner, the bound, the fettered in chains, that he gives liberty; and it is the backslider that he draws effectually to himself; so that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. The apostle Paul, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person, yet obtained mercy, and was effectually called, called in such manner as at once to proclaim the glory of the great worker, and the sovereignty of his procedure in this instance. But was he in this respect a distinguished personage? No. He himself assures us that he obtained mercy for this cause, that in him Jesus Christ

Christ should shew forth all long-suffering patience, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

4. Repentance also is a blessing, which, though in order to the enjoyment of it we must be somewhat active, yet still the motto must in all respects be "to the praise and the glory of his grace," wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." For in the first place, this, as has already been stated, is the doing of the Lord. All that we do in the matter is only and in so far as he commands our strength, works in us both to will and to do. Of ourselves we cannot repent after a godly sort; it is only as the Lord the Spirit melts the hard heart, that there can be a sorrowing, a mourning on account of sin. In this view of matters, where is there any proper ground of boasting? What have we, what are we, that we have not received? Besides, it is to be observed, that repentance is the fruit of the promises, those exceeding great and precious promises, which in their nature are absolutely unconditional. It is the gift of Jesus, who is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to dispense it; and what can be freer than a gift? In short, it is so much owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God, that it is a believing discernment, a realised experience of his goodness, the riches of his kindness and grace towards persons, that is most effectual, under the management of the Spirit, to produce genuine exercise in this respect, to bring, at the first and afterwards, to that repentance which need not be repented of, but is unto life.

5. It is no less certain that justification in both its parts is entirely owing to the free love, the unmerited favour of God towards those who are thus privileged. The forgiveness of sins, a freedom from guilt, must without question be according to the

the riches of his grace; for in no other way can it possibly be realised in the experience of any. When thinking or speaking of forgiveness, we must not imagine that sin is so forgiven, as that no satisfaction is rendered to law and justice for the injuries which these have sustained, in regard this is impossible. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission. God must be just to himself, to his law, while he is the justifier of the ungodly. If then, in order to the enjoyment of this blessing, a satisfaction for sin must be rendered, and this not a partial but a full and complete one, the question naturally arises, whence is this to be found? It must readily occur, that creatures, in all the extent of their capacity, are unable to render it, and that no other was equal to the work than the glorious Surety of a better testament, who willingly poured out his soul an offering for sin. His blood as shed is that which magnifies the law, satisfies divine justice, procures the pardon of sin, and pacifies the conscience when pained under a deep sense of guilt. If then forgiveness of sins comes, and can only come to us, through our Lord Jesus Christ, however dear it cost him in the purchase, it must be considered as flowing freely to us.

The riches of divine grace are in this instance eminently displayed: In allowing a Surety, a substitute, to do that for us which we could not do for ourselves, and in not merely allowing but even providing this Surety, and no other than the eternal Son of the eternal Father. But this is not all; for not only has the Surety been admitted of and provided, not only has he accomplished his undertaking, but also the work as finished is presented in a gospel-dispensation; the blessing of forgiveness through him is freely proposed to, and urgently pressed upon us; nay, that faith which is necessary to a suitable improvement of the blessing, is the gift
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of God, and the work of the Spirit in all those who are in possession of it; so that, from its commencement to its consummation, it is an illustrious display of grace as reigning through righteousness. Besides, it is to be observed, that the blessing is not conferred only to some who are in a great measure blameless in their conduct, while it is withheld from those who are great transgressors; so far from this, on the contrary, to demonstrate that it is absolutely sovereign and divinely free, it has been vouchsafed to the very chief of sinners. A Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ cast seven devils; a bloody Manasseh; a persecuting Paul; an abandoned thief, who in his expiring moments could insult the Saviour; Jerusalem sinners, who dared to embroil their hands in the blood of the Lord of glory; to them has this blessing been extended. These had nothing to recommend them to the divine favour; they were incapable of doing any thing to influence their enjoyment of the blessing; they were remarkable for nothing so much as the greatness of their crimes, and the blackness of their characters; and one would have thought, that if ever any were to be set up as monuments of divine vengeance, these, and these only, were the proper persons: but to confound creature-boasting in this instance, and to encourage the chief of sinners to look and hope for mercy from him who comes over multitudes of transgressions, and blesses freely, these were pardoned and justified.

It is the height of folly and presumption for persons to imagine, that they can procure this blessing for themselves by their own merit. What are the best services of the best when left to themselves, but as so many whitened sepulchres, which, though fair on the outside, are within full of rottenness and dead mens bones? All our performances are lame and defective to a very great degree; and therefore,

therefore, instead of being sufficient to absolve and acquit for any former offence, they serve rather to subject still more strongly to condemnation. It is no less presumptuous to propose, that the matter shall be partly dependent upon us and Christ, so that what we have not, Christ will supply for us; as if there was a propriety or even a possibility of confounding the workings of a divine person with the feeble aims of creatures; or as if the satisfaction which Christ had rendered was not of sufficient value and efficacy, and so stood in need of something subsidiary. These schemes are all the effusions of ignorance and wickedness, an evidence of the pride and enmity of the heart, as in opposition to the grace of God, which must be illustriously displayed in the conferring of this blessing. Says the apostle, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

And as forgiveness of sins must be owing entirely to the free love and unmerited favour of God, so also an acceptance of the person as righteous, which is the other part of justification. This is obvious. For in the first place, that righteousness which is the ground of acceptance, upon the footing of which persons are declared righteous, is not of or from themselves, but is of and from the Lord. They were incapable to work out a righteousness in which to obtain acceptance; for nothing can proceed from fallen creatures which the law can sustain as righteousness. Divine grace therefore displays itself both in admitting of a surety-righteousness to supply the want of a personal, and also in providing with this righteousness, in presenting it to us by the gospel. But this is not all; for that faith in persons which is necessary to an apprehending this righteousness, is also given them, and brought forth into proper exercise; and that plea

which

which it presents, is graciously sustained as relevant, and imputed as sufficient, for the purpose towards which it is proposed. Besides you are to observe, that when the person is justified, he is considered as not working, but as believing; that is, as one who has given up with all dependence upon himself for righteousness, and who is determined to be indebted to another for it; has accordingly had recourse to another and a better righteousness than his own, which he improves and employs as the matter of his justification before God. And hence there is no ground of boasting with creatures in this instance; the whole is and must be to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein we are made accepted in the Beloved. Thus the apostle, "Now to him that worketh, the reward is reckoned not of grace but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith," i. e. that which his faith terminates upon, "is counted to him for righteousness." According to the apostle here, it is obvious that God not only justifies those that in themselves are ungodly, upon the footing of an imputed righteousness, but also he intimates, that faith in this instance does not merely terminate upon a righteousness without the person to his justification, but also it takes up with God, in this endearing part of his character, as justifying the ungodly, without which there could be no confidence in presenting a surety righteousness as its plea before him; and while this is the tenor of procedure, it evidently points out that justification is freely by grace.

6. Adoption is also thus to be constructed of. This is so undoubted, that it cannot possibly be realised in any other way. Even in that adoption which is among men, it in general is owing to the free and unmerited favour of the adopter towards the adopted, and does not arise from any previous

obligation constraining to it. Thus at any rate is it as to that spiritual and divine adoption of which we now speak. While this is unquestionably the work of God, so in conferring the blessing, it is clear he had no inducements, was under no obligations whatever, but such as arose from himself. It is entirely owing to his free love and unmerited favour, that any are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. "To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." In accomplishing this blessing, it is evident there were various difficulties to be overcome, much condescension to be expressed, great power to be exerted, and the exceeding riches of divine grace to be displayed. Those who are thus favoured had so grievously offended God, so justly incurred his displeasure, were so vile and worthless in themselves, and filled with such enmity against God, that nothing but love that was absolutely sovereign, and divinely free, could operate to the enjoyment of the blessing. The more minutely the point is examined, the more clearly will this be discerned. There is such a display of love and grace on this occasion, as is both inexpressible and incomprehensible. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God," 1 John, iii. 1. It is not on account of any worthiness, even the smallest, that those possess, as distinguishing them from others, that they are thus privileged; it proceeds entirely according to the freedom of his own will, and the sovereignty of his grace. Thus the apostle, "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 5.

7. Sanctification with equal propriety must be considered in the same light. Though in sanctification

cation we are not indeed wholly passive, but must be active and exert ourselves to the utmost; yet, as it is only in so far as God works in and by us that we can do any thing; in regard the progress that is made is by no means in the smallest degree dependent upon us, for of ourselves we can do nothing, but the whole is the doing of the Lord; in these circumstances it must be evident, that in this instance there is no ground of boasting with creatures. What have we that we have not received? And you will observe, that when God works in sanctification, it is expressly according to his good pleasure that he does so. He is neither constrained to it by necessity, nor influenced by motives independent of himself. Hence the apostle, after exhorting persons to exercise a due care as to progress in sanctification and salvation, encourages them to this by pointing out the proper method in which matters can successfully be managed. Says he, "It is God which worketh in you both to will" and to do, *of his good pleasure.*" But not only is sanctification in this view to be considered as owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God, but also it is to be observed, that this is the grand source of, and a constraining motive to obedience, to holiness in heart and life. It is in consequence of eternal love flowing forth towards them, the eternal purpose of grace centering upon them, that any in due time become holy, are renewed in the whole man after the image of God. It is in virtue of a believing discernment of this love, as terminating upon them, that any are powerfully constrained to a following after holiness in all manner of conversation; and there cannot be acceptable obedience, or evangelical holiness; but what flows in this channel. Says the apostle, "The love of Christ" constraineth us,—that they which live, should "not henceforth live to themselves, but unto him

"who died for them, and rose again." We may add, that the higher, the more distinct these apprehensions are which are attained, the more extensive the experience is of this love, the greater will our progress be in a course of sanctification. When the heart is thus enlarged, there will not be merely a walking but even a running in the way of God's commandments. It is farther to be considered, that the gospel, which is a dispensation of grace, and hence called the grace of God, Titus, ii. 11. that this is the powerful means by which sanctification is promoted. Says the apostle, "The grace of God—teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Thus it is clear, that this blessing is entirely owing to the free love, the unmerited favour of God. This will be readily admitted by all who have a proper discernment of matters. Thus the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 10. however active he had been, whatever he had done, he notwithstanding fully acquiesces in this conclusion; for, says he, "*by the grace of God I am what I am.*"

8. Peace is entirely owing to the free love, the unmerited favour of God. This will fully appear, if the blessing in all its extent is properly attended to. Peace, as it points out God's being at peace with the person, and pacified towards him, notwithstanding all that he has done, must certainly be enjoyed in this way; for unless it had originated from sovereign and rich grace, there is no other possible way for its existence. Peace, when it respects that peace and reconciliation which is on our part towards God, as it is the doing of the Lord, so, in like manner, it proceeds from and is promoted by his free love and unmerited favour towards us; and unless it had this foundation to rest upon, could never be genuine.

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in the experience of any. Says the apostle, "We love him, because he first loved us." In regard to peace of heart, and peace of conscience, still the same conclusion must hold: For while this is the doing of the Lord, he does so, not because they deserve the blessing, or have a just title to it, but because so it seemeth good in his sight. He does not create peace because he must or should do so, but because it is his special prerogative. He does not speak peace in consequence of his being under obligations to do so, but simply because it his sovereign will and good pleasure. His sovereignty is no where more conspicuous than in conferring this blessing: he suffers the storm to rage, the waves to swell, the conscience to be in a sad alarm for a season, that the purposes of his grace and the designs of his glory may be advanced; and no sooner is this done than instantly he commands, and there is a calm; and when he does so, he in effect proclaims, Be still; but know that I am God. In short, peace, when it respects all creatures and events, as this is the fruit, the effect of his gracious promise, so it must be a blessing which in its nature is to the praise and glory of sovereign grace.

9. Victory over enemies, final perseverance, without question, are thus to be constructed of. In regard to victory over enemies, this is clear: For though, in order to the enjoyment of the blessing, we are and must be somewhat active, yet in its nature it is a display of rich grace. This will appear if we consider, that, while in its commencement, on-carrying, and consummation, it is wholly the work of God; at the same time, in working he acts most sovereignly; and that those by whom he works, in human reckoning, are far from being the most calculated to bring matters to an happy issue, but quite the reverse. That this is and must be the doing of the Lord, is obvious; for

were he not to commence the work, keep his hand about it, and exert himself towards its consummation, the blessing could never be enjoyed. Well, if the work be wholly his, there can hence arise no ground of boasting to creatures: it must certainly be entirely to the praise and glory of free grace, more especially when it is considered, that in working he acts most sovereignly. There are no inducements in or from the creature to influence the divine conduct in this instance.—This is evident.—For instead of an opposition originally existing betwixt us and our enemies, which needs only to be cherished that it may at length turn out to some good account; so far from this being the fact, on the contrary, however foolish and inconsiderate a part it is, we are by nature in love with sin, in league with Satan, glorying in our chains, and confederating with our enemies: And hence the Lord has to commence his operations with breaking our covenant with death, disannulling our agreement with hell, awakening us to see, and alarming us with the danger to which we stand exposed. But this is not all: even when the warfare is commenced, and persons are endowed with a disposition and a capacity for it, yet how ready, when left to themselves, are they to turn aside unto crooked paths with the workers of iniquity. In these circumstances, is it not obvious, that when the Lord, in this instance, works for any, he must be acting most sovereignly, not only because so he wills, but also in regard there is nothing on the part of creatures to influence his conduct? Those who have proper views of matters will readily admit this: their language will be, Not to them, not to them, but to rich, sovereign, reigning grace, be all the glory. In the progress, as well as commencement of the warfare, they wish to preserve the same views, the same language. They must go forward; but unwilling, and unable of themselves, how

how is this to be accomplished? Why, they will go in the strength of the Lord.—When thus exercised, shall they have a ground for boasting? By no means. They neither have any such, nor will they claim it: they will make mention of the Redeemer's righteousness as that in which they desire to be exalted. Nor will the highest attainments to which they arrive prevail with them to think or speak otherwise, so far as they are acting a proper part. When matters are at length happily issued, and complete victory is declared as in their favour, they will then cast their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and acknowledge that the glory of all is his due, in regard the whole has been his doing, a display of rich grace; for which, instead of having reason for boasting, they ought and are disposed to be exceeding thankful. Thus the apostle, 2 Cor. ii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 57. You will observe, that victory is declared to be a gift, and what can be freer than a gift. In short, when it is recollected, that the Lord chooses the foolish things of the world, the things that are not to work by, that no flesh might glory in his presence; that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; that it is not by might or by power, but by his spirit, and according to his good pleasure, the exceeding riches of his grace, that the spiritual warfare is terminated; it must be evident, that victory over enemies is wholly owing to the free love, the unmerited favour of God.

In regard to perseverance this is no less undoubted. If we attend to the nature of the blessing, the grounds by which it is secured, and the channel through which it flows to us, it will be obvious that this is eminently to the praise and glory of sovereign grace. Perseverance is a work so arduous and important, that creatures are utterly unequal to engage in it. It can only be by the mighty power of Jehovah that any are kept through faith unto
complete

complete salvation. If then this is entirely the doing of the Lord, there can hence arise no ground of boasting to creatures. What have they, what are they, but as it proceeds from almighty power, and sovereign grace ! Besides, when we consider the grounds by which this blessing stands secured, the fact must appear unquestionable. What are these, The almighty power, the infinite wisdom, the boundless grace, the inviolable faithfulness of Jehovah ; the unchangeable covenant that was made betwixt the Father and the Son ; that spiritual, vital, ineffable union, which subsists betwixt Christ and believers ; the infinite value and efficacy of his obedience unto death ; his all-powerful and ever-prevalent intercession ; and the personal inhabitation of the Holy Spirit : These are the solid grounds by which it is secured, and these certainly pronounce the blessing to be according to the exceeding riches of grace. This becomes the more evident when we also advert, that the blessing is both secured by and flows to us in the channel of the promise, that promise which is absolute and unconditional, which is yea and amen in Christ. There are various exhibitions of it in the sacred volume : It shall suffice to present you with one or two instances. Job, xvii. 9. " The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Jerem. xxxii. 40. " I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

10. It must be granted, that glorification, in all the extent of the expression, is entirely owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God. Divine sovereignty displays itself no where more remarkably than it does in the consummation of salvation. While before there were only some striking appearances of it in continuation exhibited, yet
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now it blazes forth with an inconceivable effulgence of glory; for the Head-stone of the spiritual building shall be brought forth with shoutings,—Grace, grace unto it. Formerly divine sovereignty was of necessity to be acknowledged and adored; but now it shines forth with such amazing lustre, that grace, grace, must unceasingly be resounded in the highest strains. And there is the best grounds to influence this exercise; for grace, as a sovereign, reigns eminently in glorification. Whether we view the blessing as pointing out a perfection of exercise, or a perfection of enjoyment, still the motto must be to the praise and glory of his grace. That perfection of exercise to which persons shall then attain, will be so superior to any thing they are capable of, or can comprehend, that it would be the most daring presumption for any to arrogate the smallest influence in bringing it about, or insist that it arose from any merit to which they could lay claim. That perfection of enjoyment to which persons shall be raised so much exceeds all that they could possibly demand or desire, nay, stretches so far beyond their utmost expressions and conceptions, that it can be ascribed to nothing else than to the superabounding riches of sovereign grace. Accordingly, it is observable, that that which constitutes the perfection of enjoyment in heaven, as set forth in Scripture, is always represented as proceeding precisely in this channel. Thus, if the happiness of heaven is described under the notion of enjoying a kingdom, arriving at the dignity of kings, and being exalted to sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; still we are assured, that all this is the doing of the Lord, wholly the effect of free and unmerited favour, and in no respect dependent upon the persons themselves. Hence the kingdom is said to be appointed by legacy to them; provided and prepared for them; and even they brought

brought to the possession of it. It is not acquired by conquest or procured by their own merit. Hence, also, they are described as made kings; not born to this dignity, or having attained to it in virtue of their own exertions, but raised from the dunghill, and by the precious blood and Spirit of Christ ennobled, and thus exalted to this high honour. So likewise their sitting on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, is pointed out, Rev. iii. 21, as the effect of a sovereign uninfluenced grant: not as proceeding upon the footing of an inherent right, or an acquired title. In like manner, if the happiness of the saints is pointed out by eternal life, it is declared to be the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. vi. 23. If it is expressed by a crown of glory, a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, still it is represented as proceeding in the same channel. Divine sovereignty still triumphs: Divine grace reigns through righteousness in every period of blessing from election to eternal life by Jesus Christ. Says the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing;" 2 Tim. iv. 7.

Upon the whole then, we apprehend it is clear beyond a doubt, that the several blessings enumerated as belonging to salvation, are wholly owing to the free and unmerited favour of God, and to no motive or reason on the part of the sons of men as influencing them; and we humbly apprehend, that there are equally sufficient grounds for making the same conclusion as to every other blessing belonging to, or included under the comprehensive term *salvation*; and that therefore, in both views of the expression, it is a most undoubted and comfortable truth, that **SALVATION IS BY GRACE.**

S E R-

S E R M O N XII.

EPHESIANS, ii. 5.

By grace ye are saved.

HAVING, in the preceding Discourses, attended to the nature of that salvation which is here said to be enjoyed, and illustrated the assertion in our text; it now remains that, as was proposed, we,

III. Make some improvement of this subject.
And,

1. We have hence presented to us, what should be a most interesting object of concern with all, salvation. Certainly there is nothing which can be of greater importance to any than this. All have destroyed themselves by sin, and are unable to help themselves. The being in such circumstances, without question, is far from being desirable. What then should ingross our attention so much as deliverance from this state? What avails it, however much apparent good we seem to enjoy, while we are estranged from the experience of every real blessing, are for the present under the curse of God, which embitters and impoverishes all enjoyments, and are in future exposed to all wretchedness

ness and woe. If we would be truly wise for ourselves, we must, with the jailor, be anxiously inquiring after salvation; we will be in earnest to have it ascertained whether it is attainable, and if attainable, how it may be enjoyed. If we have acquired just apprehensions as to our state, what relates to this will appear of all other objects the most interesting; in comparison of which every thing else will shrink into its native insignificance. This is without doubt the one thing needful, that good part which shall never be taken away from those that once have it in their possession.

2. We are hence instructed how salvation is or can be enjoyed. It is by no means of or from the person's self. It is not the work of creatures, the wisest and the best. There was among the whole creation no eye that could pity, or hand that could help, and therefore perished the whole human race inevitably must, had not Jehovah himself interposed and wrought deliverance. The work was so great, so difficult, that none other was equal to it. Infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless grace, were indispensably necessary, and had to be illustriously displayed, for otherwise no such blessing could have been enjoyed. Hence, in the Scriptures of truth, salvation in the most explicit terms is repeatedly pointed out as wholly the doing of the Lord, the effect of his great wisdom and mighty power, a glorious display of rich grace. Thus particularly, Hosea, xiii. 9. Psalm iii. 8. Jonah, ii. 9. and in our text.; in all which the way and method through which any are or can become possessed of the blessing is clearly proposed. It must invariably, and without peradventure, be the doing of the Lord, wholly owing to and dependent upon him: if ever saved, it must be by grace. Would you then be saved with an everlasting salvation, you will perceive whence and how

how it is to be obtained. Your eyes must be to the Lord; for truly in vain is salvation to be looked or hoped for from any other quarter. Beware of cherishing an indisposition for receiving the blessing in that way in which alone it can be enjoyed: This is but too natural, and but too common. Be importunate with the Lord, that he may bring down those high towering imaginations which are in you, and which exalt themselves against him; and that, as an evidence and earnest of what great things he will do for you in due time, he would teach you effectually, engrave more and more upon your minds, this important though humbling truth, that you are nothing, and of yourselves can do nothing; and thus make you willing to be an eternal debtor to rich grace.

3. We have hence pointed out to us the peculiar dignity and happiness of the Christian, the person saved by grace. The dignity to which he is raised is inexpressibly great; in consequence of what he possesses, and has the assured prospect of, he with the utmost propriety may be hailed as truly happy. It is his peculiar privilege to have been from the ages of eternity an object of divine distinguishing love, even under the foresight of, and in opposition to, that criminal part, which, in connection with the first man, he acted, and those innumerable aggravated transgressions with which he is personally chargeable. As an object of Jehovah's everlasting pity and compassion, as having his goodwill ever towards him, and which only waited the appointed season for its flowing out in acts of beneficence to, and complacency in him; when that season arrived, he was first regenerated, born again, made a new creature, gracious habits and principles were implanted, and thus the good work commenced. These habits and principles were not only implanted, but are also powerfully drawn forth

forth into exercise. While the person has his faculties and members new moulded, has spiritual life given him, these are put into motion, so as that the obedience of faith is rendered to the calls of grace. He is effectually called. Nor is this all.

Having embraced Jesus as his Saviour, having fled for refuge, and laid hold on that hope which is set before him, he obtains a full, free, and irreverfible pardon, the complete remiffion of his fins through the blood of the Redeemer, fo as that there is not, there cannot be any condemnation arifing againft him either now or hereafter. The fenfible enjoyment of this bleffing, under the influence, the efficacy of the eternal Spirit, operates in his experience an heart-melting forrow and concern for fin, produces an hatred, an abhorrence of it, a loathing himfelf on account of it; and fo brings about a turning from fin to the love and practice of holinefs.

Befides, the Chriftian is not only acquitted from guilt and abfolve from condemnation, but he is alfo judicially conftituted and legally declared righteous, is invefted with an indefeafible right and title to all fpiritual bleffings. He is completely juftified; nay, he has fuch kindnefs fhewed him, and fuch good done him, that he is received into the number, and has a right to all the privileges of the fons of God; and what is ftill more, he is endowed with the difpofition of fons, and is in fome fort enabled to exemplify it in an humble walk, and an holy converfation. Being united to Jesus, and abiding in him, he brings forth fruit, delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man, and is zealous of good works. As a diftinguifhed perfonage, he enjoys the invaluable bleffing of peace in all the extent of the expreffion. Whatever enemies may prefent themfelves before him, however numerous and formidable thefe are, he

he needs not be much disturbed or disquieted, in regard, without a peradventure, he shall overcome them all at length. His God will in due time give him a complete victory over them, and subdue them wholly under his feet. Nay, whatever discouragements he may labour under, whatever difficulties he may have to encounter, however feeble and unfit in himself for the journey, and even in so far unwilling to prosecute it, yet after all he need not fear altogether turning aside, or coming short of the city of habitation; for he shall without a doubt hold on his way as kept by the mighty power of God. To sum all up: he shall at length be brought to the wealthy place, the city of habitation; he shall enter into the King's palace. His exercise, however languid and languishing it was while in the valley of Baca, will then shoot forth into the fullest vigour and perfection; and his enjoyment, however limited while he was in a strange land, when he arrives at his Father's house, will become inexpressibly great; for he will then be admitted to fulness of joy and pleasures evermore, which are at God's right hand. Being made all glorious within, having his garments of wrought gold; the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed him, and lead him to living fountains of water, and his God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes. The dignity, the happiness, which is comprehended under all this, is inexpressible, and even inconceivable; yet this honour have all the saints; and, in consequence, how enviable is their situation! how earnestly should it be aspired after!

4. We may hence perceive wherein the Christian's security for the enjoyment of all spiritual blessings lies. It certainly is in this, that salvation, and all the blessings belonging to it, are the work of God, and the effect of his free favour, his rich

grace; and being thus situated, the complete enjoyment of them is firmly secured. But were this not the case, what reason for uneasy apprehensions, when it is considered that the work of salvation is so important both in its commencement and consummation, that there is such opposition managed to the carrying it forwards; when the Christian attends to his own situation, how many enemies he has, how frail and feeble in himself, that he has neither a will nor an ability, that iniquities sadly prevail against him; when all this is in view, certainly, did salvation in any part of it depend upon human exertions, there could not be the smallest security as to the possession of the blessing, but the best reason to be in constant alarm, and even to conclude quite the reverse. Happy for the Christian, he has by no means to depend upon so precarious and so feeble a tenure; he is sufficiently warranted in considering that salvation to which he has been chosen, and of which he is already made a partaker, as infallibly sure and certain in all the extent of the blessing, and this because of the solid grounds upon which this security is founded.

Salvation in no part of it is the work of foolish, feeble, fickle, man, but is wholly the doing of him who is Almighty; the only wise God, who is rich in mercy; the unchangeable Jehovah, who keepeth truth for ever. In this view salvation must be sure; for our God is a rock, and his work is perfect; nothing can be too hard for him; he works so as none, nothing, can let him: and it is no less secured from this consideration, that it is wholly owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God. Hence, whatever abominations may be in the heart, whatever impure communications may have proceeded from the lips, and whatever evils may have defiled the hands; yet these

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can by no means prevail to a being disappointed in the full enjoyment of the blessing, when and where it has really commenced. These indeed incur the divine displeasure, and provoke fatherly chastisements, which sometimes may be measured out to a great degree of severity; yet they never do or can operate to the diminishing, much less to the entire forfeiture of the blessing. The assurance is, nevertheless he will not take his loving-kindness from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. As no worthiness in the creature had any influence with Jehovah in proposing to vouchsafe his kindness to the sons of men, so on the other hand, no unworthiness that ever appears from them, or in them, can prevail to disannul his purpose, or disconcert his gracious design towards them. It is the province of grace to act as an absolute sovereign, as entirely uninfluenced by any recommending consideration on the part of its object. It is no less its prerogative to come over multitude of transgressions, to bless freely, and the greater the mountains are which it overcomes, the more illustriously it is displayed; so that in this view also of the matter, salvation is sure and certain; and upon both these grounds, the Christian, with the fullest confidence, may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all." Rom. iv. 16.

5. We may hence learn, that the most eminent saints, those who have arrived at the highest attainments, and indeed no saint whatever has, or can have, a proper ground of gloriation or boasting before God. It is a lesson truly difficult to acquire, though a most necessary and important one, that of self-denial. We are naturally so averse to

think meanly of ourselves, that while our pretensions to merit, even in our own reckoning, are very small and slender, yet we are disposed to set them out to the best advantage, and glory in them as much as may be. Even the Christian himself, who, in consequence of his having come after Christ, has given up with vain glory, and is brought under the influence of that law of discipleship, self-denial; yet, through the remainder of the old man within him, how frequently is he involved in this snare? But though this may be, nothing is more certain, than that not one of the human race has, or can have, any proper ground of gloriation or boasting before God; even the most eminent saints have not, and much less have those of inferior consideration. If matters are as our text represents them to be, if salvation is by grace, wholly the doing of the Lord, entirely owing to his infinite wisdom and almighty power, the glorious effect of his free love and unmerited favour; in the nature of things, it is impossible that there can be any ground of boasting with the sons of men in this respect; what have any but what they have received, and received expressly as gifts, as the effect of divine bounty and rich grace towards them? What have any done, but what it was their duty to do? And besides, in strict propriety, it was not their doing, but rather the doing of Jehovah in and by their instrumentality; his grace and Spirit working in them both to will and to do, without which nothing would have been done by them: And in these circumstances, wherein is there ground for gloriation? Surely not the smallest. And you will observe, that divine grace is not only displayed in working for the sons of men, but also in working by them, making them subservient as instruments in his operations; so that instead of having to boast on this account, such are under a debt of gratitude;

gratitude, and owe a revenue of praise on this ground; and this the more eminently, that he has honoured them as instruments in his working in and for them: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded: By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith: Him that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

6. We have hence a door of hope opened up to the chief of sinners, however distressed under a deep sense of guilt: For to such what can be more encouraging than the assurance that that salvation which they are in so much need of, and which they cannot work out for themselves, is wholly the doing of the Lord, and in no respect dependent upon their exertions; that it is entirely owing to the free love and unmerited favour of God, and neither does nor can arise from any merit or worthiness in those who are eventually interested in it. However arduous and important the work of salvation is, what encouragement to look and hope for its being accomplished, when it is understood, that it is the special work of Jehovah to bring it about. Almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless grace, must, without doubt, be considered as every way equal to the undertaking. What though the corruptions of your natures be great, the iniquities of your lives be multiplied in their number, heinous in their nature, and highly aggravated; what though you have sinned both against light and love, in the fullest sense of the expression, are stout-hearted, and are far from righteousness, are thus, in your own reckoning, and even it may be in fact, the very chief of sinners; yet still there is no sufficient grounds for indulging despair. On the contrary, while salvation is by grace, there is a glorious foundation laid for your entertaining a confidence that ye shall be saved with an everlasting salvation. For though salvation, as
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being by grace, affords not the smallest countenance to a continuing in sin, yet it looks with the most benign aspect towards the sinner, and, as it were, is impatient of flowing forth in all its riches towards the most grievous transgressor. Being by grace, the greatest unworthiness, and the most heinous crimes, are and can be no insurmountable bar with any, as to their enjoyment of salvation; for the more that there is of this, the more illustriously will divine grace be displayed in vouchsafing the blessing. Grace bounds over multitudes of provocations, and is as a roe or a young hart upon mountains of Bether. Were there any intrinsic worthiness in the objects of salvation, it is impossible it could at all be by grace; for grace and merit are altogether incompatible. Accordingly, the more unworthy the objects are that are thus favoured, this, as it were, serves the more fully to demonstrate that salvation is by grace, and that there is an exceeding riches in that grace which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ towards them.

Let no one, after what has been stated, presume to think or thus express themselves: "Though
 " salvation is the doing of the Lord, the effect of
 " sovereign grace, yet it is only such to persons
 " who, though grievous transgressors, have, upon
 " its being presented to them, readily embraced it.
 " But as to others who, along with their being sin-
 " ners, have filled up the measure of their iniquity
 " by repeatedly resisting the divine intreaty; reject-
 " ing the calls of the gospel, and pouring the ut-
 " most contempt upon this mercy and grace, have
 " thus effectually spurned away the salvation of
 " God from them; with such there is, there can
 " be no sufficient reason for imagining that there
 " is either a propriety or a possibility of having
 " verified, in their experience, that salvation is by
 " grace.

“ grace. On the contrary, it is more natural and
 “ just to conclude, that grace, even that grace
 “ which has been so slighted and abused, instead of
 “ displaying its riches towards objects in every re-
 “ spect so abandoned, that it will glory in their
 “ confusion, and concur to promote their misery
 “ and anguish.”

This is far from being sound reasoning, or good gospel: it is nothing other than the suggestions of Satan and unbelief. For though it is a most awful truth, that this mercy and truth, if finally trampled upon, will most certainly glory in the confusion, and concur to promote the anguish of the impenitent transgressor; yet it is, without question, a most grievous insult and injury offered to sovereign reigning grace, the supposition that it is or can ever be capable of turning away from or refusing to exert itself in behalf of those who ever desire to be indebted to its riches; even though their transgressions should be ever so aggravated, and though they may have, in repeated instances, poured the utmost contempt upon it. It is the peculiar excellence of divine mercy, that it comes not merely over some, or even many, but expressly over all provocations, and blesses freely. While the day of grace lasts, and the door of mercy stands open, the Lord waits that he may be gracious. You will observe, that it is not said to what extent he will be gracious: the matter is open and indefinite; and so there is a glorious foundation laid for devising liberally at his hands. Whosoever will may come; and him that cometh, whatever his situation and circumstances are, shall in no wise be cast out, or sent empty away. So far from aggravated transgressors being debarred from all expectations of an interest in this salvation, on the contrary, they are expressly invited, *Isaiah, i. 18.* : When the scarlet colour, and crimson hue of deep guiltiness is stated by di-
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vine justice to the condemnation of the transgressor, in order to an arrest of judgement; and what is still more, that a freedom from condemnation, and a full salvation may be enjoyed; the gracious direction to such is, that they improve the blood of Jesus, which is all-powerful to discharge the foulest blots, the most deeply ingrained stains; that they employ the Spirit of Christ, who can effectually purge from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; and that they, in the exercise of a lively faith, betake themselves to that mercy which, as reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ, is boundless. And this done, what glorious and blessed effects will assuredly follow: Such will be pardoned, justified, sanctified, and glorified: nor is this a mere conjecture; it has been fully verified, as you see, 1 Cor. vi. 11.

After all, some may still be ready to urge, "What encouragement can this be to the guilty sinner, that salvation is by grace? when, though every other difficulty was set aside, this unsurmountable one still occurs, That salvation, in order to its being realized, must be embraced by the person. But while there is an inability, as well as unwillingness, to every good work, with all by nature, how then is this to be brought about?" Blessed be the author and finisher of salvation, that this difficulty, however specious, and however much improved by Satan and unbelief, is by no means unsurmountable: Nay, if matters are attentively considered, it must instantly vanish. True it is, that this salvation must be embraced, and that we of ourselves are unequal to this work: But then it is to be remembered, that salvation can only be rightly embraced in the exercise of faith. For, says the apostle, in the 8th verse of the chapter, "By grace are ye saved through faith." And while this is the case, we are also told, that this faith is not of or from ourselves, but is the gift of God, and

and the work of his Spirit ; so that there need be no demur upon this head. The gracious call is, "Look unto me, and be sayed, all the ends of the earth ;" "for I am God, and there is none else." This points out to us, that instead of looking inwards to ourselves, as if capable of doing any thing, we are always to look outwards to the promise, power, and grace of Jehovah, which is every way sufficient for bringing forwards every good word and work.

7. We may hence be instructed, whence it is that any under the dispensation of the gospel perish. This might be variously accounted for ; but, we apprehend, it is chiefly owing to their wilful contempt and neglect of that salvation which is by grace. If this salvation is wholly the doing of the Lord, for whom nothing can be too hard ; if it is entirely the effect of that grace, the riches of which are exceeding great, which is not restrained from, but rather illustrated, when it flows out towards the stout-hearted, the far from righteousness ; if this salvation, so ordered, is presented to all under a gospel dispensation, and pressed upon every individual without exception ; if all are made fully welcome to an interest in the blessing ; if all this is the case, as is most undoubted, certainly if any, thus privileged, perish eternally, the blame must lie with themselves. The direful issue to which matters at length arrive, is clearly occasioned by their wilful contempt and neglect of the great salvation : For, if this had been duly embraced, no such thing could have befallen them. Whatever wants any had to be supplied ; whatever diseases required to be cured, however enlarged the demands and desires of any were, the salvation proposed by the gospel was and is every way equal and sufficient for the whole ; and if suitably improved, would have turned out to be well ordered in all things

things and sure; but this neglected and despised, it cannot fail but that final ruin must befall such. This in effect is what they desire, what they deserve, and what, in the nature of things, must be.

However awful to think of, or express it, this is what such clearly desire. If the blessing and the curse, life and death, salvation and eternal woe, be in our offer, as is the case with all under a gospel dispensation, which ever of these we embrace, and one of them we must embrace, for there is no medium, we certainly desire and demand this as our portion, while we reject the other. If then we do not chuse the blessing, life and salvation, which is set before us, we clearly take up with the other as our portion; and then it is no wonder that we in consequence have it rendered to us. But this is not only the desire of persons, but also it is what they justly deserve.—The wages of sin is death.—By their original as well as actual transgressions they entail upon themselves all misery and woe. And this becomes more especially their due, from their having despised and neglected that way of escape, which is provided, and has been proposed to and pressed upon them. Such as do so, without question deserve to perish; nay, in the nature of things, it is impossible that matters can be otherwise. If, after all have destroyed themselves by sin, and cannot help themselves, any neglect the great salvation, despise the only remedy, how can there be an escaping? There remains no more sacrifice for sin: there can be nothing other in prospect to such, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversary; and all this occasioned by their wilful obstinacy and perverseness: “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and

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"obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." This being the case, be in earnest that in this your day ye may know the things that belong to your peace; While it is said to-day, hearken to the Redeemer's voice; harden not your hearts against him as in the provocation; see that ye refuse not him that speaketh to you from heaven.

8. We are hence taught the extreme folly and presumption of attempting to save ourselves, either in whole or in part. If salvation be the doing of the Lord, what he claims as his province and prerogative, nay what by no means could have been accomplished unless he had interposed to this end, as is obvious from the nature of things, and expressly ascertained in our text; then what folly and presumption more extreme can there be, than for the sons of men to propose engaging in so arduous an undertaking, either in whole or in part? We have neither an ability equal to the work, nor have we authority to enter upon it; nay, when doing so, we are clearly encroaching upon the divine prerogative, and upon the matter are re-acting the same criminal part with which our first parents, and we in them, were chargeable; we are aspiring to be as God. While almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless grace, are indispensably necessary to the accomplishment of salvation in every part of it, our proposing to save ourselves in any instance is in effect a saying, that we have, or at least would become possessed of, almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless grace; than which nothing can be more presumptuous. Besides, and independent of this, if persons will impartially attend to their own situation by nature, and at the same time consider the importance of salvation, the folly and presumption of proposing to accomplish it by their exertions must be evident. By nature we are

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weak and without strength; sin has so enfeebled and enervated us, that we are as incapable to exert ourselves to any good effect as the new born infant, nay, as the person that is really dead. We are in fact spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and in sins. While this is our situation, it must be folly in the extreme to propose accomplishing our relief either in whole or in part. Salvation is a work, which, however necessary, is not easily brought about; and at any rate, certainly cannot be brought about by persons, who can do nothing. Even though the matter should be carried farther, and the person considered as in part saved, by having spiritual life infused, and spiritual strength imparted, with the implantation of all gracious habits and principles in the soul; though the foundation for making progress should thus be laid; yet even in these circumstances, if matters are duly considered, the folly and presumption of proposing to carry on and complete the work must be very obvious. When we reflect how arduous the undertaking is in itself; how much more difficult it is rendered by the opposition which is managed against it both from within and from without; when we feel how unfit for and averse we are to every good work at any time; how incapable we are to command a good thought, or to arrest the attention to religious services; in short, when we recollect that the heart is so deceitful, and so desperately wicked, as altogether to exceed our comprehension and management; we say, taking all these under our consideration, it must be the height of folly, the extreme of presumption, to propose carrying forward, much more completing the work, even upon the supposition that it had already fairly commenced. Alas! was the spiritual life, when once infused, left to our cherishing, it would quickly expire and be extinguished:

ed: Was that spiritual strength, when once imparted, wholly with us for preservation and increase, it would soon evaporate, and we become weak as ever: Were those gracious principles, when once implanted, entirely dependent upon us for their existence and exercise, they would remain for ever dormant and useless. Happy for the Christian that matters are put upon a very different footing. The foundation of the spiritual building is not only laid for him, but also the superstructure is reared, and the head stone in due time put on it, by the same kind and almighty hand; and were not this the case, it could never be.

In short, the proposing to save ourselves in the smallest instance, is an attempting to render ourselves independent of Jehovah, as being a declaring, that of and by ourselves we can do something; at any rate, it is in some measure a placing ourselves upon a level with him in working, a presuming to rival him in that praise and glory which is his due; the folly and criminal nature of which is clearly evident. None can work as Jehovah does, for he works so as none can let him; and he is a jealous God: he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.

While thus it is folly and presumption in the extreme, the attempt to save ourselves either in whole or in part; how criminal must it be, and yet how common is it in these degenerate times, to teach, that salvation is by works, that persons must be greatly indebted to themselves for all that they enjoy or shall experience? One would think that the opposite is so clearly laid down in the Scriptures of truth, and so deducible from the nature of things, that unless persons were wilfully disposed to pervert it, there could otherwise

no such thing be proposed. But alas! while the natural pride and legal bias of the heart remains in full force; while darkness and ignorance prevail over the understanding, and while we are enemies in our minds to God by wicked works, it is not to be wondered though persons, as being under strong delusions, should both believe and teach such false and destructive doctrine. The mind must be enlightened, and the will renewed, as well as the enmity of the heart overcome, before there can be a distinct apprehension of, or submission to this truth, that *salvation is by grace*. They who have not attained to this privilege, in a particular manner claim the pity and prayers of those who have, as walking in darkness, and seeing no light. When those who are in the office of the ministry are thus situate, how much is it to be lamented! the consequences how dreadful, if sovereign mercy do not interpose! When the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch and perish. With those who have come to the knowledge of this truth, and yet wilfully pervert, disguise, or conceal it, how affecting and alarming is their situation! Would to God there were none in these circumstances! But there are too good grounds afforded for concluding that this is the case with but too many; and each, with the disciples, should be jealous over themselves, and saying, is it I? When an uniformity of doctrine does not prevail, when the sentiments expressed do not exactly correspond with the convictions of the mind, when there is a studied accommodation of what we call truth, to the varied tastes and humours of those before whom it is delivered, then there must in some instances be either a declaring we know not what, or else a wilful perverting, disguising, or concealing matters, a holding the truth in unrighteousness;

righteousness; to do which is at once most criminal, and most dangerous.

9. We hence have proposed to us the sphere in working which belongs to us, and in which it is incumbent upon us to act, with the account which should be made of our services. If Jehovah be the great master builder in this work, if salvation be wholly owing to his almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless grace, as is most undoubted; then the sphere that belongs to us must be that of servants; instruments which are employed, furnished, strengthened, and guided by him in that work; who durst not presume upon the work, but as employed by him in it; who could propose doing nothing effectual, but as strengthened and guided by him in the whole. And while this is our sphere, it is incumbent upon us to exert ourselves as much as may be; for though it would be the highest presumption to aspire after another station, as being incapable of, as not having the smallest claim to it, yet in this sphere much is required and expected from us. While Jehovah has the honour of, and actually exerts himself as the great master builder; yet, as in carrying on that work, he employs means and instruments, has both appointed and declared the person's self to be in this situation, that if ever the work is carried on effectually, he must not only work for the person, but also must work in and by him, must have him as an acting and active instrument in his hands; that as strengthened and directed, he must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling: matters being viewed thus, much we say is incumbent upon us.

Duty and interest press upon us an exerting ourselves to the utmost. Duty clearly binds to this. Jehovah, as our great Lord and Creator, has an indisputable

indisputable right to our service in whatever way he may demand it. Having therefore actually laid claim to it in this instance, we are under an indispensable obligation thus to exert ourselves, and the more so as our interest is no less concerned than our duty in the matter. For if it be the appointed order of possessing an everlasting salvation, in all the extent of the blessing, that the person, as an instrument, is to work, and that without this it cannot be; certainly interest must in the strongest terms dictate to us the necessity and propriety of exerting ourselves to the utmost, lest by our carelessness and indolence we should come short of the blessing. An attention to this is highly proper. For though the Lord by his Spirit and grace does all for us, yet in doing so, he by no means gives the smallest countenance to indolence or inactivity on our part. When he works, he works by us; he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and when he does so, he leads out to diligence in business, fervency in spirit, and disposes to serve in spirit and in truth.

It is thus that salvation is brought about; and it is carefully to be observed, that though, as has been stated, it is folly and presumption in the extreme the attempt to save ourselves, yet we are not thence to conclude that we are to do nothing. There is a vast difference betwixt saving ourselves as workers in that business, and the being employed as instruments in carrying it forwards. This is a distinction which, if duly adverted to, would disentangle persons from many embarrassments in which they are involved: for though in the one instance it must be folly and presumption to propose it, in regard the attempt would be unavailing; yet in the other, it is both wise and proper that persons exert themselves; for when doing so, they are in the line of duty, acting in their proper sphere,

sphere, and may hence warrantably expect its turning out to a good account. The Lord has graciously engaged to them, when thus exercised, to work in them both to will and to do, to command their strength: He meeteth him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, that remembers him in his ways. All which being considered, it is easy to understand what account should be made of our services. If we can only work as instruments, and even in this capacity are incapable of any thing, but as furnished and fitted for it; if our best exertions are strikingly defective, without doubt these can never be the foundation of a plea, the proper ground of a title to any blessing. The only proper account that can be made of our services is, that they are expressions of that homage, and discharges of that duty we owe God; that they are evidences of our gratitude, a return proper for, and competent to us, for his kindness so liberally vouchsafed us.

We have hence a clear demonstration afforded, that the grace of God has no tendency, even the smallest, to licentiousness. This is evident; for that salvation which is by grace includes under it a being born again, a having the old man with his deeds put off, and the new man put on, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. It contains under it a turning from sin so as to loath and abhor it; a turning to the Lord in the love and practice of holiness. It comprehends a progressive work of sanctification as a special part of it; for such as are saved by grace are called to holiness. This salvation in short both demands and secures an attention to good works, without which it cannot be enjoyed. Such as are redeemed from iniquity are at the same time made a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The grace of God both in the outward dispensation of

it in the gospel, and in the realised experience of it in the heart, powerfully "teacheth us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

It is indeed a common, though a groundless aspersions cast upon this doctrine, that it has a tendency to licentiousness; that it evidently weakens and even entirely undoes the obligations to morality; that it opens the floodgates of iniquity, and lays aside all restraints whatever, as giving God all employment, as leaving nothing whatever for the sinner to do on his part; nay, as intimating to persons, that be or do what they will, they have nothing to fear; almighty power will reclaim, sovereign grace will easily triumph, and all at length will be quite well: so that the more persons sin, the more awfully that they rebel, the more glory will in this way redound to sovereign grace. But, my brethren, whoever think or express themselves after this manner, evidently discover their ignorance of the nature, their unacquaintance with the influence of grace, as displayed in the work of salvation. They strikingly betray a disposition to reproach and revile it at any rate, however undeserving of such treatment. In whatever way the merits of this question shall be decided, if it is done in an impartial unprejudiced manner, there is not the smallest doubt but that sovereign grace shall maintain its dignity unsullied, and that, even its enemies being judges, it shall be vindicated from so foul an aspersion.

Though divine grace looks with the most benign aspect towards the greatest sinner, yet it gives not the smallest countenance to a continuing in evil doing; and it is without question perverted and abused when such an improvement of it is attempted. "Shall we sin," says the apostle, "that grace

"may abound? God forbid." If the nature and tendency of divine grace, according to the representation which is given of it in the Scripture, is consulted, it is obvious that it has not the smallest tendency to licentiousness, but that its uniform, native, and necessary influence, is to promote the love and practice of holiness. If we appeal to stubborn facts, and attend to the exercise of those persons over whom grace has most signally triumphed, the argument will appear equally conclusive; for they of all others are most zealous of good works. Iniquities indeed too often prevail against such; but this, so far as acting in character, and under the influence of divine grace, they neither allow nor approve of: it is what they wrestle against, deeply bemoan, and desire deliverance from. Thus the apostle: "O wretched that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

It is readily allowed, that there are many who profess to be indebted to free grace, and who use it as a cloke to their licentiousness: But such are quite estranged from all acquaintance with, and experience of this blessing, in its genuine nature and influence; for, were this their attainment, it is impossible that the other could be. There can be no conclusive argument against the truth or nature of any thing, taken from what is exhibited by persons wholly unacquainted with it, and enemies to it; otherwise an end will soon be put to every thing, and universal scepticism must ensue. The best things have been abused; and therefore, from the abuses which have appeared in relation to sovereign grace, nothing injurious to its nature or influence can or should be deduced; besides, this is nothing other than what we are forewarned of. The apostle Jude acquaints us, that ungodly men had and would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the Lord that bought them. — In short, so far from

from the grace of God having a tendency to licentiousness, on the contrary, the more indebted any person is to the riches of divine grace, the more humble, holy, and heavenly he is, and must be, "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works; these things are good and profitable unto men."

¶ We have hence represented to us the deep obligations we are laid under, to love God, and to live to his glory. If by our original apostacy from God we have destroyed ourselves: If we are wholly unable and unwilling to repair that ruin which has befallen us: If there was no other eye to pity, or hand that could effectually help: If our situation, in respect of what creatures were capable of, was altogether desperate: If Jehovah was under no obligation to interpose in our behalf, but quite the reverse, would have been just, though he had suffered the whole human race to perish: If, notwithstanding of all this, he has graciously thought upon us in our low estate, and, as to some, hath said, Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom: If the salvation which is thus proposed be entirely an act of divine sovereignty, wholly the doing of the Lord, and altogether an illustrious display of the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards the sons of men through Christ Jesus: If this salvation is presented to, and pressed upon us in a gospel-dispensation, while others are left in ignorance to grope in the thickest darkness; and not only pressed upon us, but also actually realized in the happy experience of some:—If all this holds, as most undoubtedly it must, what deep and accumulated obligations are we in consequence under to love God. Certainly such unparalleled love and kindness should and will

will have powerful influence with persons to live, not to themselves, but to the glory of him who hath done so great things for them. With the greatest propriety such may be addressed in the words of the apostle. "Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your souls and in your bodies, which are God's." With what exalted strains should we acknowledge and adore the love and kindness of God our Saviour!—Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men! This is a debt which can never be discharged. Eternity is too short to utter all his praise. — This leads us,

In the *last* place, to remark what should, and what will be the exercise of those that are saved with an everlasting salvation, while in this vale of tears; what will be their sweet employment through the countless ages of eternity in heaven. Doubtless it must and will be, to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light; to declare what is the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them through Christ Jesus. While such will trace the happiness which they enjoy to its proper source, that everlasting love with which they were loved, and bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; as they will recognize their deep obligations to the eternal Spirit, for his works of wonder in their behalf, and hence render to him that honour and homage which is his due; so they will cast the crown of their salvation at the Redeemer's feet, and offer to him thanksgiving; for he hath done marvellous things: His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten the victory. They will thus give unto God, a Three-one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, that glory which is their due, for of them, and through them, and to them, are all things. Their language

language will not merely be in regard to others, that *salvation is by grace*; but explicitly in regard to themselves, they will acknowledge and avow the wondrous truth. Each will be ready to join with the apostle in declaring, as he did, "By the grace of God, I am what I am;" and that the whole of what they have done was not their doing, but the grace of God which was with them. They will celebrate and proclaim the greatness of almighty power, the depths of infinite wisdom, and the riches, the exceeding riches of sovereign grace; that grace which reigns towards them through righteousness by Jesus Christ. This indeed can only be in feeble strains while in this vast, howling wilderness. Their harps are also often hung upon the willows; but the time is fast approaching when it shall be their sweet unceasing employment, to sing, upon the highest key, the song of Moses and of the Lamb.—"The ransom-
" ed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with
" songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: They
" shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sigh-
" ing shall flee away."

To conclude this subject: We would beseech all to consider the need, the absolute need you have of salvation. You are sinners, self-destroyers: What so necessary or so suitable for you as salvation? Bless God, that while you cannot help yourselves, a glorious, a complete salvation is provided and presented to you in the gospel. Bless him for the freeness and fulness of this salvation; for were it not wholly his doing, and entirely owing to the exceeding riches of his grace, it would be altogether unavailing for relief to the helpless and the guilty. — Study a particular and present improvement of this salvation. Behold, now is an accepted time! Now is the day of salvation! To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts: Incline your ear, and come unto the Redeemer: Hear, and your
souls

souls shall live. Be in earnest, that this blessing may be commenced in your experience, by your being made acquainted with the pangs of the new birth; your being called out of darkness into God's marvellous light; your being turned from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Improve Jesus, who is exalted as a prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins, that you may receive these blessings from him. Seek after justification, adoption, and sanctification, through the blood and Spirit of Christ. Breathe ardently after, and press towards final glorification, a being ever with the Lord; for this also is included in that everlasting salvation with which Israel shall be saved. "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." In one word, be careful ever to keep in view, that the whole of what you are, or shall be, is, and must be, of and from the Lord: Salvation from first to last is his doing, a display of almighty power and sovereign grace; therefore look unto him daily, that ye may be saved: let it be your continued aim for the present, to shew forth the honour of Jehovah's name, and make his praise glorious; and long for that happy time, when in the ages to come ye shall unceasingly contemplate, and unweariedly celebrate "the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards you through Christ Jesus."

E e SER-

S E R M O N XIII.

ROMANS, vi. 23.

The wages of sin is death.

THERE is no truth more obvious and more undoubted, and yet less attended to, than this, that mankind are by nature in a lost and ruined condition. We are too much disposed to deceive ourselves with imagining that we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, while the reverse is the melancholy fact: We are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. What is still more affecting, as if it were not enough that we are already ruined, we are daily involviag ourselves farther and farther in destruction. This being the case, it certainly interests us seriously to inquire out the cause, and trace matters to their proper source. Effects in no instance can be sufficiently corrected till once those causes from whence they proceed are duly understood and attended to. It is the distinguished excellence of a gospel-dispensation, not only to bring life and immortality to light, but also to instruct us as to the nature of that ruin that has befallen us, and at the same time to point out, in most explicit terms, the bitter source from whence it has issued, and is still issuing. For,

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as at the first, by the offence of one, sin entered, and death by sin, and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; matters still continue in the same train. In every instance it holds, that when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, it bringeth forth death; for *the wages of sin is death*, according to what is stated by the apostle in our text.

The apostle having, in the preceding part of the epistle, established the doctrine of justification by the free grace of God through the righteousness of Christ, he, in this chapter, guards against the abuse of this doctrine, the turning the grace of God into licentiousness, and accordingly points out the necessity of believers dying to sin, their living to God. This necessity he instructs from various considerations: He first states that they were dead to the law, were united to Christ, and were under indispensable obligations arising from their baptism; and that therefore it became them to be holy in all manner of conversation: He then insists, that in regard of their being freed from the dominion of sin, and made spiritually alive, that it was incumbent upon them to live to God: And lastly, as a special incentive to holiness, he proposes the very different fruits and issues of sin and holiness; while the end of the one is everlasting life, as the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, the end of the other is death as its wages, from a just God, who will by no means clear the guilty. The words of our text are a distinct proposition, and serve at once to account for that ruin that has befallen, or is to befall any, and to forewarn the workers of iniquity as to what they shall assuredly meet with, when going on in a course of evil doing. Such work has wages annexed to it.—*The wages of sin is death.*—In discoursing from this subject, we propose,

- I. To offer some observations in relation to sin.
- II. To consider the nature of that death which is here spoke of.
- III. To illustrate and confirm the assertion in our text.
- IV. To conclude with some improvement.

I. We are to offer some observations in relation to sin. The expression *sin* is very short and concise; but in its import and meaning is most extensive and enlarged. Though in innumerable instances it is daily realized by every individual of the human race, it is but little understood, and still less attended to by the greater part. With too many it is treated as a slight and trifling matter; nay, some are so infatuated as to glory in it; while there are none so affected with, or so attentive to it as is incumbent. Such being the true state of things, it certainly cannot be improper, and it may be profitable, to lay before you some observations upon this subject; and may the Lord, the Spirit, accompany what may be offered, by his powerful influences, that you may be brought to a due discernment of, and a thorough departure from this evil!—We observe,

1. That man is dependent upon, and of course accountable to God for the whole of his conduct. This is a first principle which we should never lose sight of, as it discovers the precise point of view in which we should consider ourselves. Indeed, as blinded and infatuated with sin, we are too ready to think differently, and even at times to express ourselves accordingly; to say, as those mentioned in Ps. xii. 4. "With our tongue will we prevail: our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" But this is at once vain and impious. Nothing is more certain than that we are dependent upon God for every thing: We neither have, nor can have any thing

thing that is truly good, but what must be derived from him. "Every good and perfect gift cometh from the Father of lights." "In him it is we live, and move, and have our being." He at first formed us by his wisdom, and he continually upholds us by his power. There is not a breath we draw, a conception we form, an expression we utter, a step we move, in short, any action, great or small, we perform, but what is in so far owing to and dependent upon him. For in the literal, as well as spiritual import of the expression, without him we can do nothing. We are thus dependent creatures; and being such, we must, in the nature of things, be accountable to him upon whom we thus depend: For absolute dependence and accountability are correlates. The former clearly implies, as well as indispensably obliges to the latter: Nay, this is so undoubted, that when the one is denied, there is always an attempting, directly or indirectly, at the same time to dispute the other; for both must rise and fall together.——We observe,

2. That as being accountable to God, there is a law given forth by him, according to the tenor of which our whole conduct ought to be regulated. This observation necessarily follows upon the preceding. To be accountable for our conduct, and yet to be left in uncertainty as to how our conduct should be regulated, are circumstances so unworthy of God, that it would be blasphemy once to suppose that they existed. While, therefore, we are accountable creatures, it must follow that, in order that our conduct might be regulated in a becoming manner to his glory and our own good, God hath given forth a law to us, which is fully subservient for our direction in so important a concern. This law was originally written on man's heart, in his inward parts, when he was made fully acquainted with the whole of the divine will, and his duty.

It was soon after reduced into the form of a covenant transaction, which God was graciously pleased to enter into with his own creatures. This fair copy of the law by man's departure from, and disobedience against God, was quickly obscured in the heart, so that now it is not either clearly or perfectly to be discerned there, at the same time it is not so effaced but that there are some faint traces of what originally was still remaining, and which exhibit themselves in these dictates of a natural conscience, which are in so far with all.

In regard that fair copy of the law, which man at first enjoyed, was so obscured and blotted by sin, as to be in a great measure illegible; Jehovah in sovereign goodness has been graciously pleased to present us with a new and complete copy of it, and has committed it to writing. This is what we usually call the Moral Law, the Ten Commandments; and is in its nature that standard according to which our conduct is to be regulated. In these ten commandments Jehovah has so comprehensively summed up his will, and our duty, that if we have a spiritual discernment, we may from one or other of them obtain sufficient direction to us in every part of our conduct. And, that we the more may be furnished to every good word and work, and fortified against what is evil, we have, if we may so express ourselves, an enlarged commentary of these ten precepts in the whole of the sacred volume, every part of which is subservient to our direction in duty and difficulty. In short, it is to be observed, that whatever is expressly revealed as, or by necessary consequence is understood to be, the will of God, under whatever form it may present itself to us, that ought to be considered as the rule of our conduct.——We observe,

3. That the law of God, which all are under, is exceeding broad. This the Psalmist expressly acknowledges,

knowledges, Ps. cxix. 96. ; and it is at the same time a most undoubted truth. The law of God does not merely lay us under restraint in this and in the other important concernment, but also extends to every individual transaction whatever, great as well as small, the minutest equally as the most important : It is spiritual, and reaches to the thoughts, the intents of the heart, as really as it exercises its authority over our words and actions. It serves to regulate our whole conduct in its several distinct parts ; and it cannot otherwise be than that its influence should be as extensive as we have just now represented. To suppose the reverse, would be to overturn and invert the nature of things. For instance, were even our thoughts, which of all other parts in our conduct might be viewed as least subject to the cognisance of the law, were these not under its influence and subjection, then, in some instances, we must be considered as independent of God ; as unaccountable to him. We would then at once be dependent and independent, accountable and unaccountable creatures, which is a situation so absurd and even impossible, that it cannot ever be. Thoughts, however trifling they may appear to us, are important in their nature and consequences ; they are the sources of our words and actions ; are these, if we may so express ourselves, in embryo, and accordingly must be cognisable by the law. Besides, as the faculty of thinking is a talent which has been given us to occupy, so the improvement of that talent is that for which we are and must be accountable. Our thoughts can never be such as they ought to be, but in so far as they are conformed to that direction, which the law, as the rule of our whole conduct, affords in relation to them. If then it holds, that our thoughts are under subjection to the law and will of God, there is still stronger reason that our words

words and actions, whether viewed as respecting God, others, or ourselves, should be so. Thus it must be evident that the law is exceeding broad: and it is to be observed, that the law is broad, as not only regulating the matter of conduct we are to follow, but also as prescribing those methods of management we ought to observe in our conduct, without which being adverted to, the whole will be marred; for what may be good as to the matter, may be soon rendered far from being such, by the improper methods of management which have been followed in bringing it about.—We observe,

4. That a violation in one shape or other of that law, which all are under, is what we are strictly and properly to understand by sin. If we were not under law to God, we could not be chargeable with sin; for where no law is, there can be no transgression: But being under law to God, the moment that there is a deficiency in our obedience to and observance of this law we commence sinners; for sin in its nature is any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God; and it is carefully to be attended to, that in whatever instances the law is violated, whether by our thoughts, our words, or our deeds, yet the nature and demerit of our conduct is exactly the same. The authority of the lawgiver, the law's propriety, and its sanction, are equally struck at in the one instance as in the other. Sin in its nature is a violation of the law; and a violation of the law, whatever aspect it bears, can be no more than sin. This observation is the rather necessary, as persons are too apt to conceive very improperly of matters, to imagine that either there are some parts of their conduct, which, though not quite so becoming, are yet by no means sinful; or at least, that there are greater and lesser sins; and that as to the latter of
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of these, they need not be so much on their guard against them, or be so distressed on account of them when committed, flattering themselves that no evil can arise thence. But such apprehensions are far from being well founded, and there is the utmost danger in giving way to them. If matters are seriously attended to and examined, it will appear as an undoubted truth, that a thought and a word when a violation of the law of God, is as much a sin as an action is when in the same circumstance. At the same time it is allowed, and it ought to be taken along with this, that though every part of conduct, whether you denominate it a thought, a word, or a deed, when a violation of the law, in itself considered, is a sin; though one part of conduct is and can be no higher in aggravation than another, abstractly considered; yet as to some parts of conduct, in regard of the circumstances with which these are accompanied, and which are not in other parts, these become the more heinous and aggravated. But then it is to be adverted to, that it is not the act itself, but the accompanying circumstances which constitute the difference; and in this case it is perhaps not so proper to express any act as a more heinous and aggravated sin than another. It would seem rather more agreeable to the nature of things to denominate such acts as have these accompanying circumstances, complications of sins, as they really are; for there is an evident violation of the law by them, not only in one but in a variety of instances; in disregarding these circumstances which are annexed to them, equally as in not attending to the actions themselves, their not being framed according to the tenor of that law which we are under.

5. Sin is either original or actual. This is the grand distinction which takes place, and which, when considering this subject, it is proper we advert

vert to. In the former of these views, the whole of mankind are chargeable with this evil: "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." In both these views, all that arrive at the years of discretion are verily guilty. "There is none that doeth good, and sinneth not." "What the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Sin, whether we denominate it original or actual, is always of the same nature and complexion; for whatever qualifying consideration may be annexed to it, sin must still be a violation of the law of God in one shape or other. There is, however, a distinction in so far betwixt original and actual sin. The distinction indeed does not so much arise from the nature as from the quality of these evils; accordingly, original sin is usually considered to be the sin of our natures, that which we bring into the world with us, for we are born sinners; and this comprehends two things under it, the guilt of sin, which is imputed to us, and the pollution of sin, which is inherent in us, and transmitted to us by natural generation. By the disobedience of one man we become sinners, we are both constituted and made sinners; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. From this corrupted source, this polluted fountain, issue forth as streams all those evils with which we are personally chargeable, and which are denominated *actual*, as being the proper act and deed of every individual for themselves. This points out all those transgressions of, all that disobedience to the law, whether in thought, word, or deed, which have been committed by us from the period we were capable of sinning, to the close of our existence. Under this head

head there are included ills past reckoning with all; and under both heads is comprehended the whole of that guilt with which any are chargeable. And it is to be observed, that original sin and actual transgressions are so blended together, are so inseparably connected, that we cannot arrive at suitable concern or exercise in relation to either of them apart. The nature of the one is best discerned when viewed in connection with the other; we will not be deeply affected with either, if we are not duly attentive to both at once.

6. Sin, in its nature, is either a doing that which we ought not to have done, or a not doing that which we ought to have done, according to the tenor of that law which we are under. Sin in general is a violation of the law in one shape or other. This violation may be reduced to two heads, as comprehensive of every particular violation whatever. However diversified these violations may be in name and aspect, yet in their nature they are either an omission or careless performance of the duties required, or they are a transgressing, a leaping over, a turning aside, an erring from those just boundaries which are prescribed us by the law of God: they are thus either an excess or a defect, an omission or a commission; the effect of indolence and enmity, or presumption. And here it is to be observed, that when stating sin in this view, as either an omission or commission, we do not merely consider it as pointing out an omission in relation to the matter of duty solely, or a doing the reverse as to the matter of the thing, whether in thought, word, or in deed; but also as having a respect to the manner in which we conduct ourselves in both cases: For it must be admitted on the one hand, that though what is required be upon the matter attended to, yet if it is not gone about after that order and method

method which has expressly been marked out to us, in the eye of the law there is not a doing what we ought to have done, and of course there must be sin, the law being equally violated, though not to the same extent, as if an entire omission had taken place; for the law requires conformity to itself both in the matter of duty, and in the manner of discharging it. In like manner, on the other hand, though as to the matter of evil there may not be an actual transgressing, or turning aside from those boundaries which are prescribed us, yet, if in guarding against this, the person is not actuated as the law directs, still the conclusion must be as in the other instances, circumstances being varied. The law of God being perfect, never considers that as obedience to it which is not in every respect corresponding to its requirements; whenever there is an excess or a defect, whether in matter or manner, then the law is violated, sin is committed, and guilt is incurred.

It would be an endless task exactly to particularize this general observation, so as to point out in every instance what is sin. We persuade ourselves we have so stated the point, as that every one keeping it in view is capable of descending to particulars, and making application for himself, so as to understand when he is the sinner. From this account of matters, however, one important lesson may be deduced, and that is, the importance and necessity of acquainting ourselves with those duties which the law of God requires, and acquiring just views as to those boundaries which are prescribed for our conduct; so that we in some sort may guard against sin, and aim at a doing what is required of us. Without a proper knowledge of duty, it cannot ever be reduced to practice, or can we eschew evil while we are unacquainted with what is forbidden. At the same time it is carefully

fully to be adverted to, that ignorance as to either of these is far from being a relevant excuse for criminal conduct, while we have an opportunity afforded us for knowing our duty, and are expressly enjoined to acquaint ourselves with it. In these circumstances, ignorance, so far from being an excuse, rather adds to that guilt which we otherwise incur. There is not indeed such a depth of guilt in ignorant sinning, as in wilful, perverse, presumptuous transgressions. That persons however, though ignorant as to duty and sin, when they neglect the one or commit the other, are guilty, is beyond a doubt. To convince as to this, let us have recourse to common life, and the matter will be obvious. Will a servant be considered as blameless, if either he did not what he ought to have done, or did what he ought not to have done, and in apology, ignorance is alledged? While there were sufficient instructions afforded him, and he was specially called upon to attend to these, will not his ignorance, in justice, be viewed as a crime in itself, rather than an apology, as serving to aggravate rather than extenuate his conduct? The application is easy, and comes home with still greater force when the matter is considered as betwixt God and us.

7. Sin is that which is in direct contradiction to the nature and will of God. There is, there can be no higher point of ambition, than an aspiring to be like God, who is the sum and centre of all perfection. There is, there can be nothing more amiable or excellent with us, than an obedience to the will of Jehovah, which is holy, just, and good. And it is to be observed, that God's nature and will is the same. The one is as it were the original, the other a transcript: both of them in the most striking manner display an opposition, a contrariety to sin. Sin is just the reverse of what God is.

It is that only evil in which there is no good; the superfluity of naughtiness, the quintessence of what is odious and execrable, and the opposite of what is amiable and excellent. Sin, strictly speaking, is no positive being, but rather a non-entity; it is a want of perfection, either a defect or excrescence; it is that which mars the nature, and deranges the comely order of things. In short, it is that evil, that abominable thing which God hates, as being in direct contrariety to his nature, and in diametrical opposition to his will.

It is either an explicit or implicit rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. Jehovah is the sovereign Creator, and he is the supreme Lawgiver to all his creatures. Subjection to his law and will is most certainly due to him by them; and this not merely in some instances, but in the whole of what he enjoins. It is his authority which gives being to the law. What constitutes duty is, *Thus saith the Lord*. Accordingly, when duty is not in any instance discharged, when there is a departure from it, when sin is thus committed, there is clearly a rebelling against the authority of the lawgiver, in refusing obedience to his will and law; there is either an explicit casting away his cords from us, a bursting asunder his bands, or else there is an implied denial of a dependence upon him; persons indirectly arrogating to themselves an irresponsible liberty to do their own will, to live as they list, regardless of what is God's law and will. The language of sin and sinners is, that there is no God; or, as it is expressed, Psalm xii. 4. "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" The nature of sin, however little it is apprehended, is a stating an opposition to the divine will, a pouring contempt upon his authority, a proclaiming war against him; and this is the fact at all times, though

in some instances it is more visible than in others. But this is not all, for

Sin offers an insult to the whole of the divine perfections. This, if the least attention is given to the matter, must appear most undoubted. In the first place, it is diametrically opposite to the holiness of God, which is the peculiar glory of the Deity. An illustrious transcript of his holiness shines forth in his law. While therefore sin in its nature is either a doing that which the law forbids, or a not doing that which the law requires, it must be directly and formally in opposition to the divine holiness; and hence is pointed out as that abominable thing which God hates. In like manner, it attempts to vilify the divine wisdom. This attribute of the divine nature shines resplendent in his laws; they are all framed in an exact conformity to his nature, his relation to us, and the powers of man before these were corrupted. The divine law being thus a transcript of his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, and indeed the whole man, to esteem and approve, to observe and obey it. When this is not the case, when there is a departure from duty, a disobedience to the precept, there is in doing so evidently an attempting to vilify the divine wisdom, as displaying itself both in the precepts of the law, and in the sanction annexed to enforce obedience; there is upon the matter a taxing the former, as an unequitable yoke, as too severe, as an unnecessary confinement; there is an accusing the latter, as weak, and insufficient to serve the purpose. Sin, moreover, is an high contempt and abuse of the divine goodness, which shines forth in his kindness towards us, and which should have a powerful influence in binding to duty. While we are monuments of his creating and preserving, if not also of his special goodness, this lays an indispensable obligation upon us to love

and serve God, by an obedience to his law. Sin, however, bursts asunder these bands, and casts away these cords. When it prevails, instead of making a proper account of any blessing, it in the most open manner tramples upon it, and the divine goodness, from whence it proceeds; nay, mercies are so abused and misimproved as even to be turned against their glorious giver, and are employed in that warfare which is carried on. Besides this, sin dishonours the divine justice. While the sinner promises himself peace and safety, notwithstanding of that wrath and vengeance which is denounced against him by Jehovah the lawgiver, he then labours to dissolve that connection which subsists betwixt sin and suffering, guilt and misery, which is not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded in the nature of things, the demerit of sin, and the essential rectitude of the divine nature. There is also in sin a bidding defiance to the divine power, as if it either was not, or would not exert itself as effectual to execute the divine threatening. It is a calling in question the divine faithfulness, as if the threatening was only a mere scarecrow, and nothing more. At the same time it strikes at the divine omnipresence and omniscience, and implicitly denies both. The language of sin and the sinner is, "the Lord seeth not, neither will he regard." In short, sin is so base and abominable a thing, that it attempts to rob God of all that glory which belongs to him, to sully the honour, and tarnish the lustre of all his perfections.

8. Sin, while in its nature it is a disclaiming that honour and homage which is Jehovah's due from us, a rising up in rebellion against him; it is at the same time a conforming ourselves to the nature, and subjecting ourselves to the will of the devil. Sin is in the strictest propriety his work. God and Satan are at irreconcilable variance with each

each other. Their natures and wills are diametrically opposite. One special object of contest betwixt them is in relation to mankind. The former, viz. Jehovah, demands as his due their entire homage and service; the latter, viz. Satan, would usurp the same prerogative, and insists that we shall fall down and worship him. In every part of conduct we must in so far be taking a decided part, more especially in that which is our own act, as allowed and approved of by us; of course we must either be glorifying God, or serving the devil. When, therefore, we are now doing the one, we must most certainly be changeable with the other. In consequence, as sin cannot be viewed as a glorifying God, in regard it is not agreeable to his nature, his will, and law, but quite the reverse; it must of necessity in its nature be a serving the devil, a conforming ourselves to his nature, and subjecting ourselves to his will. Thus, without controversy, is it to be considered in every instance. The original rebellion that was in paradise was in compliance with the suggestions, in conformity to the will of Satan; and all the actual sins of men since the fall are by his efficacious influence, and in virtue of our subjection to him, either total or partial. He darkens the carnal mind; he sways the stubborn will; he excites, inflames the vitiated affections; and through the whole of the man, imperiously rules in the children of disobedience. Hence he is styled, "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. The God of this world." But not to enlarge upon this subject, —

In the last place, we observe, that sin is in its nature an offering violence to ourselves. This is a view of it which Christ, the personal wisdom of God, affords us. Says he, "Whoso sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul." Sin, however

much gloried in, is far from adding dignity to any character, nor does it conduce to our safety and happiness. No; quite the reverse. It deforms and defiles the soul, renders the person loathsome and abhorred in the sight of infinite purity. It covers with shame and confusion of face, involves in guilt, and thus binds over to punishment. It entails death with all its horrors, and in all the extent of the expression; for *the wages of sin is death*. This naturally leads us, as was proposed,

III. To consider the nature of that death which is here spoke of. Certainly an attention to this is of the last importance. It will avail us but little though we in some sort know the nature, if we are not at the same time acquainted with the consequences of sin, the present fruit that it produces, and the final issue to which it leads. A superficial, imperfect view of this last is by no means sufficient; there should be a thorough understanding of the matter sought after, that by due regard to it, our conduct may, in a becoming manner, be influenced. Every wise builder, before he attempts to erect a superstructure, considers the cost and the consequences of the undertaking, that he may avoid what is dangerous and destructive; and every wise person, acting as such, weighs the nature and probable tendency of every action previous to its being realized. And thus ought it ever to be. But, alas! this is seldom the case. Were a proper attention rendered to the nature and consequences of evil doing, this would deeply affect and alarm; it would often deter from an entering upon it. The apostle here expressly declares, *the wages of sin is death*; and this death comprehends under it all that is dismal, direful, deplorable, and destructive. It is usually taken up in a threefold point of view, as pointing out death, natural, spiritual, and eternal.

nah. An illustration of these will present us with the true import and meaning of this expression in our text; and therefore we shall arrange our thoughts upon this subject accordingly. — We observe then;

1. That that death which is the wages of sin, is death-natural. This in general points out the dissolution of the animal life, the separation of the soul from the body. When the body is without the spirit, then it is dead. This death is to be viewed, in its commencement, its progress, and in its perfection. It is to be viewed in its commencement; and this takes place when the seeds of mortality are infused into the human frame, so as that the person becomes mortal, as is the case with the whole of mankind so soon as they are brought forth into existence. Mankind in their primeval estate were not subject to death; and had not sin entered, they would not have known what it was, or at least have tasted of it. But by one man sin entered, and death by sin. Adam having, by his breach of that covenant which God had entered into with him, incurred the penalty threatened, he instantly became mortal, agreeable to the tenor of the threatening. Dying, he died! Death-natural had immediate and effectual influence over him in consequence of his having the seeds of mortality infused into his frame, and which entwined, insinuated themselves throughout every part of him. Death, in the perfection of it, had thus its commencement; and it was a commencement that could not misgive or miscarry. Those seeds which were sown could neither be choked nor rendered unfruitful; they were of too prolific and fructifying a nature not to produce in due time that for which they were intended. Accordingly, as the matter is by the poet emphatically expressed, They grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. And as this

was the case with the first man, it is equally so with all his descendents successively as they are brought into existence. Being sinners with him, they must necessarily share in the awful consequences. Hence no sooner is any born, than, as being a transgressor from the womb, instantly death-natural seizes upon him in its commencement: the seeds of mortality are infused into his frame: Dying, he dies! These seeds are various in their nature, and all of them are fully effectual for the purpose to which they are subservient.

But as this death is to be viewed in its commencement, so also in its progress. The seeds being thus sown, they make progress and soon spring up: they clearly distinguish themselves, and effectually make impression upon persons. The progress which is made is sometimes slower, and sometimes more rapid: It is with some more sensible and striking, and with others less so; but with all the progress is at once real and unremitted. There are various ways in which it exhibits itself, corresponding to the variety of those seeds which are sown. While the seeds are but just sown, and while the progress is not very rapid, it is not so very discernible, nor is it much felt; but the greater the progress is, the nearer advances there is to perfection, the more striking is its appearance, and the more sensible is that effect which it has upon persons. It would be at once endless and impossible to point out every particular which relates to that progress and prevalence which death-natural has upon mankind, and which in their nature do serve to constitute it. We shall as a specimen hint at a few of these things which cherish those seeds, and thus are effectually leading forward to this issue, death in its perfection. The ground upon which we tread, and which, as cultivated, should be subservient to the preservation and nourishment of life, is cursed on account of sin; hence

hence it brings forth little other than briars and thorns to the sinner; instead of being as once it was, it now continually in so far proves baneful, and hastens forward matters to the fatal issue. The air we breathe in, the food we make use of, the conveniencies we enjoy, are all of them in so far poisoned, and so have a tendency to promote that death which is the wages of sin. — The visitation of the sword, famine, and pestilence; the Lord making the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron, binding up the clouds, and restraining their necessary influences, so as that the fruits of the earth are dried up, and wither away; his sending forth the pestilence either in darkness or at noon day; those wars, mutinies, and contentions, which are stirred up in kingdoms; those disorders and confusions, discords and dissensions, which prevail in families, in larger and lesser societies; while all these are the native fruits, and woeful result of sin, so they are a part of that death which it has entailed upon the sons of men: they belong to that progress which it makes upon them; for when all these take place, they are not only effectual by their influence to the main issue, but they are even for the present in themselves as so many deaths. Besides those things already mentioned, there are distempers upon the body, and which have no small influence in carrying matters forwards in their progress: There is sickness extreme and bodily pains, burning fevers and languishing consumptions, corroding ulcers and distracting convulsions: There is the gout and gravel: In short, an innumerable train of wasting diseases and acute pains, all of which belong to that progress which death-natural daily makes; nay, they are, as it were, often that very death in miniature. But not to enlarge, we shall sum up this dreary account of matters with observing, that all those losses, crosses, wrongs, and oppression, which are suffer-

ing to the soul, and to the body, and to the world,

ed, whether in our estates, or in our reputations; whether they respect our calling and employment, or the relations we have, the connections we have formed; all these are also a part of, and serve to constitute that death-natural which is the wages of sin; for these so effectually waste the body, and prey upon the spirit, that, while endured, they both subject to a kind of death, and hence are often so expressed, and also hasten matters forward to that perfection to which this death in its commencement and progress necessarily leads us.

The perfection of death-natural, if we may so express ourselves, is something more awful, some more consummate misery, than persons were ever before acquainted with. It is impossible with propriety to describe it in the whole of its extensive terrors. If we judge of it by the aversion every individual expresses in relation to it; the reluctance with which the greater part meet it, preferring even to endure very extreme sufferings, than encounter with so formidable an evil; we must conceive of it as something very dreadful and terrible: and doubtless, from what is known of it, it must be so. To be reduced to a state of non-existence as to our bodies; to have these so putrified and corrupted, as that they moulder away into dust from whence they came; to have such near and intimate companions as the soul and body are, separated, removed at such a distance from each other, and for so long a period; to be torn away from every endearing relation and enjoyment which we have on earth, and plunge through the thickest gloom and horror to a world unknown and inconceivable by us; in short, to be shut up in darkness, and to be confined to the house of silence, the lonely mansions of the grave: These are some, though not the whole of these circumstances which constitute what we understand by death-natural in the utmost extent

tent of the expression. How awful, how affecting a scene must this be when it is realized ! But awful and affecting as it is, it is nothing other than what sin produces as its wages and demerit. By the offence of one, sin entered, and death by sin ; and death has passed upon all men ; for that all have sinned. There is no exception of any individual from under its influence. " For death reigned " from Adam to Moses ; even over them that had " not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

2. That death which is the wages of sin, is death-spiritual. This is another ingredient in that bitter mixture which is pointed out to us. Though little thought of, and still less dreaded than the former, it is vastly more awful and alarming. As the soul and the spiritual interests are infinitely more precious than the body and temporal concerns, so that death and ruin which befalls the former, must vastly exceed in importance the dissolution of the latter. But great as this evil is, it is included in that death which is the wages of sin. And here, as in the former instance, our ideas as to this matter, though assisted by that discovery we have afforded us in relation to it in the Scriptures, must be altogether inadequate to the subject. Being but very imperfectly acquainted with the nature of spirits and their enjoyments, we cannot either to purpose conceive or express the nature and extent of that death which seizes upon them. One thing however must be understood, and that is, that there is an extremity in this death that is not competent to death-natural, however gloomy an aspect it ever may assume : And, it is farther to be observed, that whenever it seizes upon any, it is instantly consummate, and maintains an absolute uncontrouled dominion over the person. There is not, as in death-natural, a commencement, a progress, and a consummation ; but death-

death spiritual is at first all that it can ever be. Little as we can apprehend of it, it presents us with a complication of the most grievous woes and miseries. — We shall instance in a few of these for an illustration.

In the first place, death spiritual is a state of absolute distance and alienation from God, who is the chief good. To be near God, to be at peace with him, and to have him at peace with us, is certainly a state of most desirable enjoyment; for in his favour is life. Every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights. Well, while this is the case, certainly to be removed from such enjoyment, and this not merely a short way, so as that there remained some hopes of restoration; but to be utterly removed from it, and not only to be in a state of absolute distance from God, but also to be alienated from, and averse to the situation of matters being betwixt us; these are circumstances so debasing and so distressing, that it cannot well be expressed how much so they are. The farther we are separated from God, the farther are we removed from every thing that is amiable and excellent, and the nearer do we approach to that which is odious and abominable. But to be separate from God, and at the same time alienated from him, this conveys to us such a depth of depravation and ruin, as well deserves the name death; and hence spiritual death in Scripture is thus expressed. It is pointed out as being without God and without Christ, without all proper knowledge of, affection for, or desires after them. It is declared to be an enmity against God; for such as are spiritually dead, are enemies in their minds by wicked works; they are alienated from the life of God. In short, as natural death specially consists in the privation of the animal life, or, in other words, in the separation of the soul from the body;

so spiritual death in like manner consists specially in the absence of the quickening Spirit from the soul; or, in other words, in the separation of the soul from God, who is its alone stay and support.

Besides this, spiritual death is a state of gross darkness, of utter blindness, in regard to spiritual and eternal concerns. Where there is spiritual life, there is both a having the eyes of the understanding, a having them enlightened, and a having them exercised; there is a seeing light in God's light clearly. When spiritual death prevails, there is nothing of this to be met with, but quite the reverse. The eyes of the understanding are put out; the person is entirely blind; the understanding is darkened; nay, is darkness itself in the abstract. With such as are spiritually dead, there is neither a faculty suited to discern good and evil, nor is there a disposition to exercise it, even though they had it in possession. Hence, as groping in darkness, and seeing no light, there is a taking bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; a forsaking the truth, and in its room embracing lies; a doating on the absurd fancies and vagaries of their own disordered brain. And what situation can be more deplorable than this!

Still farther, spiritual death is a state of grievous insensibility and obduracy of heart. Sensibility and tenderness of heart is absolutely necessary to any satisfying enjoyment; for we can never enjoy any thing that is satisfying, if we have not a capacity for discerning that it is so, if we are not possessed of a heart that is susceptible of the impression. Accordingly, to be in a reverse situation must be truly distressful. But such is the case with all who are under the power of spiritual death. Death at any rate is a state of insensibility, and spiritual death is eminently so; for when thus situated, persons become obdurate and insensible to every thing what-

ever: They are not only without eyes, and hence are in utter darkness, but they are also without ears, and so neither can nor will hear the voice of the charmer, let him charm ever so sweetly: They are without mouths, and so have no taste or relish for the spiritual provision: They are without feeling, and so are given over to a reprobate sense of mind, have their hearts hardened as the adamantine millstone: They are without smell, and therefore have no savour for the things of God: Sin does not affect them, threatenings do not alarm them, judgements do not affright them, mercies do not allure them: They are proof against convictions, and those means which are employed to awaken them: Nothing whatever makes impression upon them; their hearts are hardened from the fear of the Lord; they are equally insensible to the beauty of holiness, to that pleasantness and peace which are in wisdom's ways and paths, and to the deformity of sin, its direful consequences: They are in short bent to backsliding, and are to every good word and work reprobate.

Moreover, spiritual death is a state of fearful inquietude. While those spiritually alive are in possession of that peace which is ineffable, peace with God, and peace of conscience; on the other hand, those who are under the power of spiritual death are fearfully disturbed and distracted. And there is no inconsistency betwixt that insensibility we have just now stated as belonging to spiritual death, and this fearful inquietude; for though thus distracted, there is nevertheless no proper sensibility as to a due improvement of those grounds which influence their distraction: and their situation is the more awful and deplorable, that they are at once distracted and insensible. Thus, however, is it with all that are spiritually dead. No sooner were our first parents sinners, and so under the

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the power of spiritual death, than they were filled with fearful apprehensions, were seized with the terrors of the Almighty; and while they remained in that state, this was their deplorable condition. And as with them, so with all their descendants who are spiritually dead. While this death prevails over persons, there will always be, in a less or greater degree, fearful apprehensions, distracting inquietudes, and horrors of conscience, arising from that guilt with which such are chargeable; there will be discontents and dissatisfactions, which, however smothered and got under for a time, will be constantly breaking forth, and presenting themselves successively and in great variety, so as to torment the person, and embitter that natural life which is enjoyed.

Once more, spiritual death is a state of criminal fellowship with the powers and with the works of darkness. In consequence of sin, there is as it were a connection and confederacy formed by the person that is spiritually dead, betwixt him and the powers of darkness. Accordingly, that state to which he has brought himself is precisely such as we have now described it. He is not only removed from God and all that is good, but he is even joined to the devil; is in the closest connection and confederacy with the whole powers of darkness; and hence his whole course, his daily conduct, is a walking according to the course of this world, a complying with the suggestions of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. As being alienated from the life of God through the foolishness that is in them, such as are spiritually dead have their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, are fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are in every respect the children of the devil.

devil. This certainly is a most debasing and deplorable situation !

In one word, it is a state of great impurity and corruption : It is a state of subjection to the divine wrath and vengeance for the present, and exposure to all its tremendous energy hereafter. It is a state of great impurity and corruption. The person who is spiritually dead is given up to vile affections, and these so corrupt and putrify the soul, so deform and defile it, as to render it loathsome and abhorred in the sight of an holy God. The divine anger and indignation is towards such ; for he is angry with the wicked every day ; they are children of wrath. There is for the present in so far an experience of it ; and what is still more, there is an exposure to the wrath and vengeance of God hereafter, in all its tremendous energy. In short, though we have not, and cannot fully describe to you the nature of spiritual death, yet we presume we have stated as belonging to it, what is more than sufficient to convince you that it is a most tremendous evil.

3. That death which is the wages of sin is eternal death. This is a view of our subject, which if attended to as it ought to be, cannot fail to strike with awe and terror even in the prospect. But when it shall be realised, the feelings which will then arise must be inexpressible and inconceivable. In both the other views, persons may in so far be under the power of death, and yet be in a great measure insensible to the extremity of distress which is pointed out by and at length verified in them : But in this view, the moment that it is realised upon any, the full effect of it in all its extent and extremity will be felt, so far as the person is capable of it ; and will continue to be so without the smallest intermission or relaxation whatever. It is impossible for the human imagination to conceive,

the human tongue or pen to describe either the precise nature or the enlarged extent and extremity of that which is pointed out under the expression, *eternal death*. As eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what great and good things the Lord hath prepared for them that love him; so neither hath eye seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the miseries, the torments, the anguish, that is treasured up for ungodly sinners against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God. We have, however, a partial representation of it given us in the sacred volume, suited to our capacities, and with a view to warn us against falling under its power, that we may be prevailed upon to flee from it; and this representation, partial as it is, demonstrates, that it is in its nature most tremendous and terrible; who may abide it?

It is in general a combination of all that is included under the two former views, with several important circumstances superadded, which serve exceedingly to aggravate the misery of this state. Death, in the strict and proper import of the expression, points out a cessation of being and enjoyment. This in itself is most awful; but when it has eternity annexed to it, then its very nature is as it were changed: It in effect becomes a compound of life and death; has in it all the sensibility of dying, along with every evil belonging to it, heightened by the enjoyment of immortality. Eternity! eternity! that awful expression would stamp importance to the veriest trifle, were it annexed to it; and must it not add an inconceivable accession of force and vigour to the extremity of pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, when connected with either? Eternal death, as has already been stated,

must therefore be very tremendous and terrible. It consists of various ingredients; we may mention a few of them, but we are unable to express the whole, or even do justice to those which we may point out.

In the first place, then, it is a state of everlasting and irreverfible separation from God, who is the chief good. Spiritual death is in its nature a separation from God, but then it is not irreverfible; and this fpecially distinguishes the one from the other: For in the one case, though persons should be under the power of spiritual death for a season, yet, owing to the exceeding riches of divine grace as abounding towards them, they may be delivered out of this state, and have it reversed in their experience. But in the other case, when eternal death is realised, there is a full, a final, an irreverfible parting betwixt God and the person; an immoveable gulph separates them, fo that there is not the smallest ground left to hope for the situation being reversed. These cannot either draw near to God, or will he ever draw nigh to them in mercy.

But this is not all, for it is farther to be observed, that it is a state of absolute estrangement from all enjoyment of every thing that is truly good, and that for ever. This necessarily follows upon that eternal and irreverfible separation which takes place betwixt God and the person; for every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning; and therefore, while separate and at a distance from God, no good can possibly be enjoyed. Accordingly such are eternally banished from heaven; they shall never be permitted to enter that blessed place, or taste of those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand; they shall not be admitted to the beatific vision of God
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in glory; the light of his countenance shall never in the smallest degree irradiate their heads; they shall be denied the smallest intercourse with the holy angels and the glorified saints in heaven; they shall not ever in the least degree partake of that glory and blessedness which the righteous shall inherit; nay, they shall be stripped entirely even of those seeming good things which, while in the world, they enjoyed; their riches, their honours, their power, their pleasures, and whatever else their heart was set upon, shall leave them wholly and that for ever; they shall not have the smallest pity afforded them, or the least mitigation of their pain allowed them; none will commiserate their anguish or regard their pain; nay, the righteous will rejoice when he seeth vengeance.

Moreover, eternal death is a state of the most malignant and uninterrupted sinning, of unceasing and unavailing rebellion against God. When persons are under the power of eternal death, instead of ceasing to sin, as might be expected from their perceiving, in the most undoubted and alarming light, its awful consequences; on the contrary, such is the utter depravation of our natures, and the dismal circumstances to which persons are reduced, that at this period, if we may so express ourselves, they become more abandoned than ever to sinning: and in this way, they are continually treasuring up to themselves wrath, not only against, but even in the day of wrath. They maintain and manage an unceasing, an unavailing rebellion against God. Though in some sort sensible that their enmity is absolutely unavailing, they neither can, nor will ever lay it aside. They thus continually provoke his wrath and vengeance, so that in their experience it must ever be the wrath to come.

In one word, not to enlarge upon so awful a subject, eternal death is a state of sufferings the most

most extreme, of torment that is endless and unceasing. Such as are under its power shall suffer most grievously both in soul and in body, and that without the smallest interruption or abatement whatever. The vials of God's wrath shall be poured out upon them, and their contents are inconceivably dreadful and excruciating. Who knoweth the power of his anger? The envenomed arrows and massy thunders of divine vengeance shall be hurled against them, and these will at once pierce them through, and tear them in pieces. The fire that cannot be quenched, and that is heated in the furnace of divine indignation, will seize upon them, and will flame with increasing fury and fierceness against them. The gnawing worm of conscience, which dieth not, will in a most sensible manner add to their anguish. Nay, though we were to conceive of the most agonizing torments, the most acute and excruciating pains, and, were we capable of it, unite the whole in one horrid idea, yet it would fall short, infinitely short, of the nature and extent of that eternal death which is the wages of sin, the horrors of which are inconceivable. Who can tell what these plagues and woes are which infinite wisdom, almighty power, and inflexible justice, has prepared for obstinate, incorrigible sinners. The volume of inspiration, when pointing these out, expresses them in terms the most awful, and even language seems unequal for the business: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest." But what this tempest is, or to what extent it shall prevail, cannot be ascertained by expression. To sum the whole up, and to make the matter if possible still more tremendous and terrible, it is to be observed, that all hope and expectation, even all possibility of a termination or alleviation to their anguish and torments, is absolutely and for ever cut off. Their
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fetters shall never be loosed; their prison doors, when once shut upon them, can never afterwards be opened; the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever: To be exposed to all which, and much more, to be under its pressure, how dismal, how deplorable the condition! But such is the native fruit, the woeful result of sin! For, says the apostle; *The wages of sin is death*; death in all the extent and horror under which it has been pointed out.

We shall take our leave of this gloomy subject for the present: But before doing so, we would beseech all to profit by the representation which has been made you. You have had the nature and consequences of sin set before you. Consider the whole seriously; and be afraid, ye that forget to seek the Lord. We would persuade you to flee from the wrath to come, while life and death, the blessing and the curse, is set before you. See that you make a wise choice. Turn to your strong holds, while prisoners of hope. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

SERMON XIV.

ROMANS, vi. 23.

The wages of sin is death.

HAVING, in the preceding Discourse, offered some observations in relation to sin, and considered the nature of that death which is here mentioned, we go on

III. To illustrate the apostle's assertion in our text, *The wages of sin is death.* And, before being more particular, it deserves our attention the observation, that the expression is not, the wages of sinning is death, as if only a course of iniquity, or at least some heinous transgression, entailed such a punishment; but the expression is definite, limited, and particular; *The wages of sin is death*, intimating that this was the fact, not only in some cases, but in every individual instance whatever. For the confirmation and illustration of which assertion, the following observations are submitted to consideration.

1. It is to be observed, that this is the uniform, the invariable account of the matter, as given us in the sacred volume, that *the wages of sin is death*; and therefore it must be so. Were this only a random assertion, or, however solidly and repeatedly stated, were it only supported by human authority, the regard due to it could not be so considerable:

able : But when it is the express and invariable language of inspiration ; when it is contained in that sure word of prophecy, to which we would do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place ; then certainly it deserves both a becoming attention and credit from us ; for the whole of what is there presented to us, is at once most firm truth, and of the highest importance. And that this is the fact, cannot be called in question by those who are acquainted with their Bibles. Though it would have been sufficient ground of credit to it, that it was once explicitly mentioned ; yet the matter is by no means so limited. In regard of our woeful attachment to sin and Satan ; because we are so averse to listen to, or comply with any thing that is in opposition to our own will and wishes ; on account of our being dull and slow of heart to apprehend and improve what is set before us, however necessary and important it may be ; and in consequence of judgements being Jehovah's act, his strange act, his work, his strange work ; he has afforded us the most express and repeated declarations upon this head. He has given us line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little, that all may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.—Amongst the variety of places which might be quoted, as in exact correspondence with the explicit assertion in our text, the following will suffice. Ezekiel, xviii. 20. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Rom. ii. 9. “Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” Ephes. v. 5. 6. “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.”

"obedience." In all which, the matter is clearly and peremptorily stated; we are taught that death is annexed as wages, not merely to some, but even to every transgression; and if so, how fearful must the situation of persons be who are chargeable with innumerable trespasses!

12. Sin has for its wages death in all the extent of the expression, in consequence of the original inviolable appointment of Heaven to this end; and therefore it must be so. Whatever has been established by divine authority, and has the sanction of divine appointment, can never be controverted, but must ever be considered as undoubted, true, and proper. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do the thing that is right. Well, if it is a fact, that, in virtue of the divine authority and appointment, it is established, that *the wages of sin is death*; then it is clear, that thus it is and must be. That such an establishment exists, and has from the beginning existed, is beyond a doubt. In the original transaction which took place betwixt Jehovah and the first man, this appointment was made and explicitly announced: For while eternal life was to be the certain reward of that obedience which was required in case it should be rendered, eternal death was in like manner ascertained as the inevitable consequence and just demerit of an opposite conduct, should that prevail, and as such explicitly declared; Gen. ii. 16. 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Matters continue in the same state in which they were at the beginning. There has no transaction ever since been proposed betwixt God and man, respecting work and wages: Nor has this original constitution

constitution been either wholly or partially altered or reversed : it was impossible that it could be so. What was once the divine will and appointment in relation to any thing, must continue to be so for ever, while circumstances are the same ; for his will, like his nature, is unchangeable. Hence all the declarations in regard to sin which occur in Scripture, are as so many repetitions and illustrations of this original constitution, which accounts for the uniform, invariable language of inspiration upon this head.

3. Death, as the wages of sin, is what is exactly proportioned to, and in every respect corresponding with the work and service which is performed. It is an invariable general rule, that the workman is worthy of his hire ; of course there ought to be wages assigned to every work : and it is by no means enough that there be wages assigned ; it is also requisite that there be some due proportion betwixt the one and the other ; for unless this is the case, there need no such constitution exist. There is little difference betwixt the work having no wages assigned to it, and having an insufficiency. If wages are to be annexed to working, are insisted upon, it is certainly proper that these be proportioned to the work that is to be performed ; and where justice prevails, this will always be attended to. Accordingly, in the present instance, if matters are duly considered, the wages and the work will be found exactly proportioned and corresponding to each other. The wages are nothing more, are nothing less, than the work, according to the strictest estimation which can be made of it, should produce. This must certainly be admitted, if we consider who it is that has the appointment, the settlement of matters. This is none other than the Judge of all the earth, who, without respect of persons, and according to its nature and demerit, impartially judges every man's work, and

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recompenses accordingly. Besides this, if the matter is duly attended to, it will appear that there is a proportion, a correspondence betwixt this work and its wages, not only in virtue of the divine appointment to this end, but also as arising from the nature of the thing. This in so far may be deduced, when we recollect, that the divine appointment is interposed in forming this constitution; for all his works and ways are full of wisdom. The more minutely the matter is examined, the more clearly will this appear. In common life such is the constitution of things, that there are certain pieces of work, which not only have wages annexed to them, but even the work and wages are so proportioned to, and inseparable from each other, that while the work is performing, the wages at the same time are produced and enjoyed; and this in exact proportion to each other, the more work, the more wages. Thus, for instance, a person who is enslaved, and who is in fetters, but who may accomplish his freedom by his own assiduous and repeated exertions, certainly, in the nature of things, the work and the wages must be proportioned to, and inseparable from each other. In like manner, supposing the case to be reversed, that a person who enjoys liberty was so infatuated as to wish himself enslaved, or at least was taking measures that would in their nature lead to this, still the conclusion must be the same: According to the work would the wages be proportioned. Well, thus is it in the present instance: sin and death so natively and necessarily issue in, and produce each other as work and wages, that where the one is, the other of necessity, and in the nature of things, must be also. For, as the apostle observes, James, i. 18. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Persons who have improper views of sin, are

too apt to think, and even express, that there is no proportion betwixt eternal death as the wages, and sin as the work. But it is owing to their ignorance and inattention that they presume thus far. When the matter is duly weighed, sin will be found to be, not only a work of that magnitude and importance as to deserve the wages here annexed to it, in regard of its being an infinite evil, objectively considered, but also that in its nature it is a work, which, while performed, serves in so far to produce those very wages which are its due, and that the one is proportioned to and inseparable from the other. Sin, in its nature, robs us of our natural and spiritual life, and thus leads us forward, unless we are plucked as brands from the burning flame, to that eternal death, which, while it is the wages of every transgression, is also at the same time, as it were, the accumulated amount of innumerable evil services.

4. Death, as the wages of sin, is, in the most open and explicit manner, made known and proposed to all. This demands particular attention from us in considering this subject. When any work is to be performed, it is usual and proper that the employer should ascertain the cost and the consequences; and it is reasonable that the person who is to perform the work should be acquainted with the wages which he is made to expect, that he may determine whether he will engage in it or not. It is not enough that there be a special appointment as to this matter, or even an assurance that the wages and the work are exactly proportioned. This, though a great deal, is not the whole of what is requisite; for as the ideas of the employer and the worker may be different upon the subject, so as that while the former may reckon that they are exactly proportioned and corresponding to each other, the latter may be of a very different opinion; to prevent, therefore, all just ground of

complaint and difference in the issue, it is necessary and proper that the wages, such as they are, should be made known in explicit terms; and then, if the work is undertaken and executed, and the wages proposed are made good, nothing farther can be required.

Well, thus is it in the present instance. Not only is death, by the original inviolable appointment of Heaven, the wages of sin; not only is the one exactly proportioned to, and corresponding with the other, but also as such in the most explicit terms the matter is proposed: And therefore when death is rendered to the workers of iniquity as wages, there can occur no just ground of complaint whatever. Had the matter been left undecided, or in uncertainty; were persons not made acquainted with the divine appointment and constitution in this case; then doubtless there would appear some probable grounds for murmuring and repining, in regard they might alledge, had matters been in proper time unfolded to them, no such work would have been entered upon, while such wages were to be rendered for it. But this is by no means the fact. In this instance the wages are both ascertained by a solemn appointment to this end, and also there is the most explicit declaration made of this appointment, so that no other issue can be expected to result from such exertions. If such service is engaged in, no other wages can be demanded. In the original transaction betwixt God and man, as to work and wages, both were, in the most explicit manner, stated, as has been already expressed. This original statement remains unaltered to this day: It has been clearly exhibited, fully explained, and enlarged upon, throughout the whole word of God; so that there cannot remain the smallest ground for hesitation upon the subject, to those who wish to be satisfied in regard

to the wages of sin, and the wages of righteousness.

to it. Nay, in this instance, matters are upon a more explicit footing than almost in any other. For in other cases it is sufficient that there be a disposition to declare the wages, if these are duly inquired after; but, in this case, the declaration is made whether inquired after or not: so that if the worker is ignorant, he is either carelessly or willfully so.

5. Death, as the wages of sin, is either explicitly or implicitly accepted of and agreed to on the part of the workers of iniquity. While it must be considered as most foolish and inconsiderate, for a person to engage in the performance of any work when unacquainted with the wages annexed to it, so that he cannot judge whether these are eligible in themselves or proportioned to the work; we say, while this is the case, it must be granted, that it would be still more unaccountable for a person to engage in any service, while the wages annexed to it, as made known, are not either in themselves eligible, or what are approved of by him. When this last is the case, certainly the person ought not, and will not engage in the service. If the wages and the work are inseparable, he must necessarily disengage himself wholly from the one, if he entirely disavows the other; or, if he engages in the work, he, in the nature of things, both agrees to, and must abide by the wages. There is no alternative: there must either be an explicit or implicit acquiescence with the constitution. His engaging evidently points out thus much. Well, thus is it in the present instance. However awful and alarming the consideration be, yet it is a most undoubted fact, that in regard death, as the wages of sin, has been explicitly made known and proposed to all; when, therefore, persons enter upon, and continue in this service, they upon the matter, if not in the most explicit terms, accept of, and agree to the receiving those wages in the issue. We readily ad-

mit, that because the wages, as made known, are not of the most inviting nature, accordingly, it may often happen that persons may not be so forward, so disposed to accept of, and agree to them as they would be, were matters of a more amiable aspect; and it is probable, they in consequence delude themselves, under an apprehension that an agreeable alteration will take place in their favour: But as this is a mere uncertainty, a fiction of their own brain, rather than a solid ground upon which they may rest: certainly, when engaging in this service, they, in the nature of things, supposing matters to be as bad as represented, explicitly or implicitly accept of and acquiesce in that issue to which it leads. They are willing, as some express it, to run the risk: For, unless this is the case, it is absurd to imagine that they would indulge themselves in sin. If the work might be attended to with or without wages, as was agreeable to the worker, then in such circumstances the matter would be at the option of the worker: But when it is peremptorily decided, that if we engage in the work we must accept of the wages, then the matter is quite different; the consequence is obvious.

6. Death, as the wages of sin, is what on no account or consideration whatever, can be dispensed with. This is an observation which ought to command our deepest attention. When an inconsiderate step has been taken, when an imprudent bargain has been made, it is an alleviating, a comfortable circumstance, if there still remains some probability of matters being in so far rectified; but when our conduct and its consequences are peremptorily decisive, when there remains no possibility of alteration, in such circumstances then the matter is truly awful and alarming; the utmost deliberation should be exercised before it is gone into. Well, thus is it in the present instance. The

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wages which are annexed to sin, are not only expressly stated as such in Scripture, established under the authority of the divine appointment, expressly made known and proposed to all, so that ignorance cannot be alledged; but even they are either explicitly or implicitly accepted of and agreed to on the part of the workers of iniquity. What is still more, they are of such a nature that they cannot be dispensed with; where ever earned, they must inevitably be rendered. It is not in this case as it may be with mankind, that if after work the wages be not such as we approve of we may reject them, and so only have our labour lost: but here, however disagreeable and distressing the wages are, we must without peradventure receive them; that is, they must inevitably be rendered in one way or other. There is no excuse or exemption from that situation in which sin, as work, places persons; and impenitent sinners will find this to their dire experience.

For, in the first place, Satan, who is their great employer in the work, will not dispense with their receiving the wages annexed to it. So far from this, it is to be observed, that it was with the express design that he might if possible bring matters to this issue, that he proposes and prevails with persons to engage in this work of sin; and the means being calculated to produce the end, he certainly will do nothing to render it ineffectual, but will assiduously exert himself to accomplish his vile purpose: and as this is Satan's great aim, so, on the other hand, the issue is rendered still more undoubted and uncontrovertible, in respect of the divine interposition to this end.

Though the work, in strict propriety, is done to Satan; and in the nature of things persons should look to him for wages as their employer; yet in another view of matters, the consequences of the work

work are not dependent upon him, but in an especial manner are under the regulation and controul of the supreme Jehovah, not indeed as their friend, but as their dreadful adversary: For when and while servants to sin and Satan, we constitute ourselves enemies to God, and of course render him our enemy and adversary, and must accordingly abide by the consequences; they are such as can by no means be dispensed with. It is a most alarming consideration, that while Satan, the great employer of the workers of iniquity, will not dispense with the wages which are due, but insists that they shall be rendered, Jehovah the righteous Judge cannot. He must either cease to be God, or he must pursue his quarrel with, his controversy against sin, and recompense the workers of iniquity. The whole of the divine attributes are engaged in the condemnation and punishment of impenitent transgressors. Impartial justice demands, that the law being violated, the penal sanction should take effect; and that in consequence, the sinner should receive those wages which he has earned. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense sin.

"Shall he not render to every man according to his work." In like manner, the unspotted purity of the divine nature insists upon the punishment of sin. God is of purer eyes than that he should behold iniquity; if therefore he hates sin, then he must and will punish it, else it would argue a want of will or power, neither of which can be alledged without blasphemy. The unquestionable faithfulness of a holy God ascertains, that the wages of sin cannot be dispensed with; for God would not be the God who keepeth truth for ever, unless the threatening was duly executed upon the guilty. In short, the whole of the divine attributes, as unitedly harmonising upon the same design, as all engaged in the advancement of the di-

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vine glory, and in support of the honour of the divine law, they accordingly render, that the wages of sin are indispensably abiding the guilty transgressor; for though Jehovah is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" yet his name at the same time is, "He who will by no means clear the guilty."

In these circumstances then, however much persons may delude themselves with apprehensions to the contrary, yet it is beyond a doubt, that death, as the wages of sin, is what on no account whatever can be dispensed with. Neither Jehovah the judge, nor Satan the employer, will dispense with them. Each of these in their sphere will peremptorily insist that the wages be rendered to the full; and the sinner himself can do nothing to exempt himself from, or ward off that destruction which threatens him. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy." There is no escaping from the sword of vindictive justice: Whither can men fly from an avenging God? Where will they find a shelter? The hills will not hear them; the mountains will be inattentive to their loudest entreaties: Whither shall they fly from his presence? His hand shall search and find out all his enemies. Though hand should join in hand, yet they shall not go unpunished.

7. Death, as the wages of sin, has been actually made good in the dire experience of multitudes; and therefore, what is here stated must be held as a most undoubted truth. What is represented is not a matter of mere speculation, or only the effect of logical or mathematical deduction, which however plausible and well instructed, yet has never been realised. No, sirs! While it is a Scripture truth that stands supported by the best evidence,

dence, it has at the same time acquired additional importance and confirmation from its having been actually made good in the experience of multitudes. However much ungodly sinners for a season may laugh at destruction, and put the evil day far from them, ever deluding themselves that they shall altogether escape, yet it has in innumerable instances overtaken and overwhelmed them. Besides the instances of individuals recorded in Scripture upon whom the wages of iniquity have been realised, there is the old world, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Jewish nation, as to the greater part of them, after our Saviour's days to the present time; upon all of whom, according to the Scripture account of matters, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, has been assigned as their dreadful portion. Such have been made experimentally to know, that *the wages of sin is death*, and such will be the situation of all who are, and continue to be in the same or similar circumstances of guilt with them. "The wicked shall be turned "into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm ix. 17. "Upon the wicked he shall reign "snakes, fire and brimstone, and an horrible "tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Psalm xi. 6. Death as the wages of sin, are wages which instead of enriching, dreadfully impoverish persons; instead of being calculated to procure a cessation of labour and toil, they rather serve to increase and enlarge it. When work is performed by persons in order to the receiving wages for it, it is ordinarily with a view to better their situation, and when there is much work got done, persons often get enriched in this way. At any rate, one great end which persons always have in view when working is, that by doing so, at last they may acquire

quise some rest to themselves, and so a ceasing from labour; and the harder they work, the sooner they expect this to be their privilege; and it often turns out to be so. But matters are very differently situated in the present instance. Persons who are workers of iniquity, instead of being enriched by the wages which they have received or are to receive, on the contrary they vastly impoverish them. Instead of giving to them more than they have, even any thing that is remaining is taken from them: Instead of being rendered more comfortable than before, their misery and woe is dreadfully increased; they are despoiled of every thing that is truly good, and are plunged deeper and deeper into an abyss of wretchedness and woe; and this exactly in proportion to that work which they have done: Instead of having a prospect afforded as to the termination of their labours, after much service being rendered; on the contrary, the more they have done in this way, the more work will they have to perform; or, to express the matter more intelligibly, the more they have sinned, the more they would and will sin, unless restrained by divine power and grace; so that, so far from their labours in this respect ceasing, their work and toil the longer it is continued, the more enlarged and distressing does it become. As to ungodly impenitent sinners, there is not the smallest prospect afforded as to a termination; for in their case it is endless and unceasing. The wages and the work, as it were, mutually reciprocate upon, produce, and enlarge each other unceasingly: Their work of sinning shall continue and increase through the ages of eternity, and its wages shall uninterruptedly be rendered in due proportion; "for the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever."

19. Death

9. Death as the wages of sin, are wages which are no sooner earned than they are enjoyed. It is not in this case as in some others, that the work is first completely done, and then, but not till then, are the wages paid down. It here happens, as in some other cases, that even while the work is performing, part of the wages are rendered, as an earnest of full payment at length, and in order to qualify for the entire performance of the work, as is sometimes necessary and insisted upon. Accordingly, though every sin is a complete work in itself, and as such has full wages due to it, yet these wages are not immediately in the full rendered; at the same time they are in part paid down, and so enjoyed as an earnest of a complete reckoning at the appointed season. And as impenitent transgressors have a course of sinning to complete, a certain measure of iniquity to fill up; so these partial payments, if we may so express ourselves, which they receive, dreadfully qualify and fit them for accomplishing this course, and filling up that measure. Such sinners, as the wages of that work they are performing, have the seeds of mortality infused into their frame, and which are gradually maturing, hastening forwards to perfection. They are under the power of spiritual death in all the extent of it, and thus have the earnest of eternal death, as what shall in due time be their portion. They have given to them a spirit of deep sleep and slumber, blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and a reprobate conscience. The more persons sin, the more infatuated and insensible to the evil of it do they become; and hence they are the more forward to involve themselves afresh in evil-doing, to enlarge and diversify their works of iniquity, and to glory in their shame.

In the *last* place, we have only to add, that death as the wages of sin, are wages which in their full amount

amount shall at length be completely paid down to all who earn them. Though the wages of iniquity are only in part rendered for the present, this will not always be the case. There will at last be a full and final reckoning, when their full amount will be stated and paid down accordingly, and this will be when the cup of abominations is completely filled, and a course of iniquity has been entirely finished. Then Jehovah the righteous Judge, as just to himself, as just to the sinner, will render in exact and full proportion for those ungodly deeds which have been committed; and dismal and distressing as the partial wages, which for the present are rendered, are, yet infinitely more dreadful and terrible must the situation of persons be, when the Lord arises to avenge himself of his enemies, and to render a complete recompence to them that trouble him. When the full vials of his indignation are poured out, who then can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and rocks are cast down by him. And that this shall be the direful issue to which matters shall arrive, is most undoubted. Thus the apostle, Rom. ii. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgement of God? Or despilest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgement of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but

“but obey unrighteousness; indignation, and
“wrath.”

It only remains that we,

IV. Attempt some improvement of the subject. And from what has been stated, various important lessons may be deduced, such as,

1. We may hence see how great an evil sin is. However familiar it be with all, however frequently reduced to practice, yet this by no means renders it a matter of trifling, unimportant concern. The more we attend to its nature, the more minutely we examine its structure, the more reason will we have for considering it to be an evil, and a great evil, that evil and abominable thing which God hates. And certainly it must be so. When we recollect, that while man is a creature dependent upon God, and accountable to him; and as such has a law given forth, according to the tenor of which he ought to regulate his whole conduct; which law is exceeding broad; and yet, that notwithstanding of this, there is a bursting asunder those bonds, a casting away those cords from us; and this equally whether sin be viewed as original or actual: When, instead of yielding obedience to the law's requirements, or being restrained by its prohibitions, sin, on the contrary, is a wilful and wicked opposition to all that it enjoins, and this either in doing what we ought not to have done, or in not doing that which we ought to have done: When besides this, sin is that which is in direct contrariety to the nature and will of God, nay, is an explicit rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and offers an insult to the whole of the divine perfections; is not only disobedience to the law's precept, a disclaiming that honour and homage which is Jehovah's due from us, but also is a conforming ourselves to the nature and will of the devil; and
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in one word, is a wronging our own souls, an offering violence to and destroying ourselves: In these circumstances, sin certainly must be viewed as an evil, and a great evil; for it is a compound of such a nature, and consists of such ingredients, as cannot fail to constitute it such. It concerns all to consider it in this light, as Joseph did; for otherwise your exercise in relation to it will never be right.

2. We have hence ascertained the just demerit of sin, the direful issue to which it leads forwards. This is declared in our text to be death; and which, as we have observed, is an expression which contains every thing that is awful and terrible. This death is either natural, spiritual, or eternal; and death natural is to be viewed in its commencement, when the seeds of mortality are infused into the human frame, and the person in consequence becomes liable to this death, with all its attendant train of evils. It is also to be viewed in its progress, when these seeds, as sown, spring up and hasten forwards to maturity; to which it at length arrives when the animal frame is dissolved, and the soul quits its clay tabernacle, which mingles with kindred dust. Death spiritual, as has been stated, is still more awful and alarming than death natural, however gloomy an aspect this may ever assume. While the latter is only a separation of the soul from the body, the former is a separation of the soul from God, who is the chief good: While the one is only a state of natural darkness and blindness, the other is a state of absolute spiritual darkness and blindness, which is vastly more grievous and distressing than the former. Besides, in spiritual death there is the most grievous insensibility, the most consummate obstinacy prevails: There are fearful inquietudes, there is a most criminal and destructive fellowship with the powers and works of darkness; and, to

sum up the matter, there is a partial experience of, and an evident exposure to the wrath and vengeance of Almighty God in all its energy, with various other bitter ingredients, which render the person's situation who is spiritually dead truly deplorable. But after all, death eternal is still more tremendous and terrible; for while it is a combination of all that is contained under the expressions, death natural and spiritual, it has several important circumstances superadded. It is a state of eternal and irreverfible feparation from God, who is the chief good; a ftate of abfolute efrangement and feclufion from all enjoyment of any thing that is truly good; a ftate of moft malignant and uninterrupted finning, of unavailing and unceafing rebellion againft God; and in fhort, is a ftate of fufferings the moft extreme, and of torment that is endlefs and inexpressible. It thus in its nature is moft dreadful. But however affecting death natural may be, however alarming death fpiritual is, and however tremendous and terrible death eternal will be found to be, yet fin has for its wages, its juft demerit, nothing other, nothing lefs than the whole. This is what the workers of iniquity in fo far for the prefent receive. It is the direful iffue to which fin finally leads forward, and to which the workers of iniquity will arrive, unlefs fovereign mercy interpofe, and pluck as brands out of the burning. "Confider this then, and be afraid, ye that forget God, left he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you."

3. We may learn what is the mournful condition of all impenitent finners. This, from what is before us, may be eafily collected. Woeful indeed is their fituation! No fooner do they commence finners than, and as often as they reiterate this character, they have death rendered them as wages due to their work. This death indeed, in all the

the extent of the expression, is not realised at first in their experience. It is however in so far rendered, and they are exposed to the full effect of it at last. Unless sovereign mercy interpose, the vials of divine indignation will empty themselves upon them. Whatever therefore their situation and circumstances are, yet when sinners, and while in their sins, their condition is truly deplorable: They are far from God, who is the fountain of all bliss: They are under the power and tyranny of the devil; and if mercy prevent not, will at last dwell with him in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone for ever. Men may be pleased with, and applaud them, but they are under the wrath and curse of God: They may have the form of religion, may read, pray, and even communicate; but they can have no communion with the Father, or with his Son Jesus Christ. -In opposition to this, they have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; they are despoiled of all proper satisfaction as arising from present enjoyments; they are cursed in their basket and in their store; are dead while they live; are liable to all the miseries of this life, and to the vengeance of eternal fire for ever. What can be more mournful and melancholy than this, yet how common is it? Let each be jealous as to themselves; for be assured, if you are not united to Jesus, and raised to newness of life by his Spirit as dwelling in you, this character points to you, whoever you are, and declares, Thou art the man.

4. We are hence taught how careful we ought to be to guard against sin. Is sin in itself so evil and so bitter a thing, so dishonouring to God, so debasing to man? Are the wages of sin, of every sin, death? Is this death what in its nature is most dismal and destructive? In short, is there an inseparable connection betwixt sin as the work, and death

death as the wages, so that if the one is performed, the other must indispensably be rendered? If all this is most undoubted, as has been shewed, then surely we ought to be careful in watching against sin. Instead of indulging ourselves freely in the commission of iniquity, as is too often the case, under the apprehension, that our doing so was neither so improper in itself, nor yet attended with any serious consequences; instead of this, we should keep ourselves removed as far as possible from evil-doing, and this not merely in some, but in every instance: We should not reckon it sufficient that others are chargeable with more atrocious offences than we have committed, or are about to commit; for others being more guilty, will be no apology or excuse for our criminal conduct, while sin in every instance has death as its wages, which shall inevitably be rendered. If we would act a proper, a considerate part, and would profit by the representation of matters here afforded us, we will be anxious, under the influence, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to mortify our members that are on the earth; and this in every instance, recollecting, "that for these things saith the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." No one who is wise will court misery; even the most inconsiderate will in so far desire to avoid it. If then we would effectually consult our own interests and welfare, we must guard against sin. Whoso wilfully follow after it clearly declare that they are in love with death; for sin and suffering, guilt and misery, are inseparable; and if we would faithfully watch against sin, we must abstain from the appearance of evil; we must not enter upon that which is doubtful; we are to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. Our parleying with the temptation, or making the least advances towards the way of sin,

is most dangerous, and has often proved to be fatal. We may hence discern how criminal, how unbecoming it is in any to think or speak lightly of sin. Alas, this is too common a practice with all, and more especially the greater part! Instead of considering sin in that awful and important light in which it ought ever to be viewed, how ready are persons, more especially when disposed to indulge themselves in acquaintance with it, we say, how ready are they to subtract from it every important consideration that belongs to it, to reduce it in their minds, if not also by their expressions, to a very nothing. Even when admitting that it is in so far evil, yet they contend, that it is so small an evil as is not much to be regarded in this view: hence, they express themselves, in relation to it, as Lot did in relation to Zear. "Is it not a little one? Let me turn in hither, and my soul shall live." Who that has been thoroughly awakened, and is duly acquainted with his own heart, but must admit that such reasonings have prevailed with them; and with the greater part of mankind, their conduct evidently betrays in what estimation they hold sin; and they are not wanting in their expressions on this head.

But however common the practice be, it is not on that account the less criminal: It is beyond doubt at once most unwarrantable and unbecoming either to think or speak lightly of sin. Is sin in its nature a violation of the law of God? Is it in direct contrariety to the nature and will of the high and holy One, who inhabiteth eternity? Is it an avowed rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, an insult offered to the whole of his glorious perfections? Is it a conforming ourselves to the nature and will of the devil? Is it an offering violence to the person's self, a wronging his soul? Are the consequences,

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the wages annexed to it in every instance, most awful and alarming! nothing less than death, in all the extent of the expression, and which in no instance can be dispensed with, but must ever be rendered? If all this is the case, as must be admitted, then what folly and infatuation must prevail, if there shall be a thinking or speaking lightly of sin. If this may be indulged, then what may we be restrained from? If this is not a subject which should command attention, even the deepest, certainly there is not one which can have importance sufficient for the purpose. To trifle with that which is so dishonouring and so displeasing to God, which is so debasing and destructive to ourselves, must argue a total want of consideration, and is in itself most criminal and most dangerous.

Allied to this, and indeed not very much removed from it, either in respect of folly or criminality, is the practice of those who both think and express themselves very lightly as to their conduct. As if indifferent whether their conduct in any instance was sinful or not, they are not careful, they do not wish to have matters properly defined and ascertained. If some glaring impropriety is not appearing, they easily satisfy themselves that they are in the right, and are not wanting in expressions of the same tenor. And even when some glaring impropriety stares them in the face, instead of avoiding it, as should be, they rather exert themselves to colour it over in the quickest and best manner possible; and they rest satisfied, if they have any shadow to grasp at which is calculated to deceive them. The opinions or practices of others, if in their favour, is with them sufficient to stamp propriety upon their conduct, however suspicious, and even obvious, otherwise it may be. But what is all this in its nature, but a thinking and speaking lightly of their conduct; and what folly,

as well as danger, is there in doing so, while our conduct must, in every instance, be either sinful or not. Were we impressed as we ought to be with the evil that is in sin, we would reckon our conduct to be an important concern; we would not either think slightly upon the subject; we would not examine matters superficially or hastily, or would we attempt to persuade ourselves upon slender grounds, that we have acted a proper part; and much less would we presume, when deficiencies or irregularities appear, to reduce and extenuate what is observed, to a mere nothing. Whenever this prevails, it betrays evidently that we either think and speak lightly of sin, or at least would willingly bring ourselves to a doing so. Let every one look inwards to himself, and observe how far what is stated is applicable: For this is the best improvement we can make of these remarks.

6. We may hence understand whence it is that persons think and speak so lightly of sin, are so ready to indulge themselves in evil doing. However unbecoming and unwarrantable it is, yet, alas! how much does it prevail. Many reckon it but a small matter to transgress God's holy and righteous law; they can curse and swear, lie and steal, mingle with the whoremongers and the adulterers, prophane the Sabbath, with other divine ordinances, and commit many other enormous crimes, while, notwithstanding, they have but little, if any, trouble or remorse about what they have done. This being an incontrovertible fact, it certainly interests us to inquire whence does all this arise? what is the genuine source of this inconsiderate conduct? This has in part been pointed out to us by what has been delivered upon the subject: we have seen, that death, as the wages of sin, must not only in the full be rendered in due time, but that even for the present they

they are in so far made good to the workers of iniquity. The moment a person becomes a sinner, he has the seeds of mortality infused into his frame; so that dying, he dies naturally: and not only so, but he is absolutely and entirely under the power of spiritual death, in all that darkness, blindness, and insensibility which belong to it: And the more that he becomes a sinner, the more will this be his situation. Thus therefore may we account for persons thinking and speaking so slightly of sin, and indulging themselves freely in evil doing. It is owing to the prevalence of sin in and over them. While a person is, as it were, young in transgression, and has not become hardened in a course of evil doing, whatever he may think, he is not so ready to speak lightly of sin; but the more acquainted he is with the works of iniquity, and the more wages does he receive for them, he becomes the less afraid and ashamed to think or speak lightly of sin, to indulge himself in the commission of it. These wages have the dreadful influence to render him blinder and blinder, more and more insensible to the nature and demerit of sin. When, therefore, we feel any tendency of this nature with us, a verging towards either a thinking or speaking lightly of sin, it should particularly alarm us: we may be assured that sin is prevailing against us, and should be in earnest that a stop be put to it, otherwise the consequences will be fatal.

7. We may hence perceive what ought to be our present and continued great concern. If *the wages of sin is death*; if these wages cannot be dispensed with, but must inevitably be rendered; and if we, and the whole of mankind, are sinners, and as such have earned those wages; certainly there is nothing which can or which should be more interesting to us, than deliverance from that wrath and woe, the effects of which we are at present under, and to the full extent of which we are exposed, and which, unless
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turned away from us, must at length be poured out without mixture, and without measure. Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? How incumbent then is it upon us to flee from the wrath to come! to cry out with the jailor, What shall we do to be saved? An attention to this is the one thing needful: And therefore we should beware of hesitation, or giving way to delays in so important a concernment. It is Satan's great aim, if he cannot prevail to make us altogether indifferent, at the least to render us indolent and inactive, to put off matters to a more convenient season, while that season may never arrive, and it is his wish, his hope, that it shall not. But we should not be ignorant of his devices, and should guard against being taken in his snares; we should therefore make haste, and not linger, as those that are slothful, in effecting our escape from that deplorable situation into which we have brought ourselves by sin; and this, by looking to the Redeemer, that we may be saved, flying for refuge, and laying hold upon the hope that is set before us in the gospel.

8. We have hence, in the clearest manner, pointed out the absolute necessity of the divine interposition to the salvation of mankind, and that without this, there could have been no possible way of escape for any guilty sinner. If *the wages of sin is death*, and if this is the case, not only as to some sins, but even as to every transgression; if these wages must be rendered, and can by no means be dispensed with; if these wages are of a disqualifying nature and destructive tendency, so that when received, the person is more than ever disabled from doing any thing which may enable him either to avert that storm of vengeance which threatens him, or enable him to endure it till it is exhausted; if he is in fact
estranged

estranged from all good, absolutely blind, and entirely overwhelmed in darkness; if he is grievously insensible, and is in a state of confirmed obduracy; if he is weak and without strength; has neither the will nor the ability for working, but is to every good word and work reprobate: But all this, and much worse is his situation when under the power of death, and this, not merely in one, but in innumerable instances: We say, if all this is the case, then certainly, in respect of what can arise from creatures, their situation is desperate; for, while they are rendered incapable of doing any thing for themselves, they have incurred more than what, if executed upon them, would never cease in the execution; for that wrath and death which sinners have earned, after all that were to be endured by them, still would be the wrath and death to come. This being the real situation of matters, it is evident to a demonstration, that nothing less than an almighty arm and power was sufficient to bring about the salvation of guilty sinners. This was indispensably necessary; for while creatures were incapable of doing any thing which was even subservient to this design, much less a doing that which was nearly equal; while this was the case, there was nothing short of almighty power that could engage in the undertaking so as to accomplish it; an enduring all that death which was annexed to sin as its wages; a yielding all that obedience which was necessary to bring in an everlasting righteousness. Had not Jehoyah's arm brought salvation, the whole human race must have inevitably perished. It is only through his gracious interposition that relief has, or can ever be found in the experience of any; and therefore it is at once most foolish and criminal to presume upon expecting it otherwise.

9. We have hence demonstrated the exceeding riches

riches of divine love and grace as displayed towards the sons of men through and by Christ Jesus. If the wages of every sin is death; and if innumerable evils encompass even the best of men, so that every individual is, as it were, bound over to suffer innumerable deaths, as arising from his innumerable transgressions: If this is the case, and if we at the same time recollect that there is an innumerable company whose innumerable sins Christ had laid upon him, the wages of which in full detail were rendered to him without diminution or alleviation: If, we say, all this is taken under our serious consideration, then we cannot fail to perceive, in a striking point of view, the exceeding riches of the divine love and kindness, as displayed towards the sons of men through and by our Lord Jesus Christ. For, when we consider the dignity of the sufferer, who was none other than the eternal son of God, he who is the independent, the self-existent, and the supreme Jehovah; when we advert to the persons for whom he suffered, and recollect that these were such as, instead of deserving any favour or kindness at God's hand, had done all in their power to dishonour and displease him; were not only enemies and rebels, but were filled with enmity against him: In short, when we contemplate what was done, and had to be done for them, in accomplishing their redemption; that Jesus had not only to veil his divine glory, and assume human nature; that he had not only to become man, but also to appear in the form of a servant, to be despised and rejected of sinners; a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; nay, that he had to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, as the wages and demerit of sin; and not only death in all the extent of the expression in one instance, but in the innumerable instances in which it had been incurred by the innumerable company in

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whose

whose room and place he stood, so that there was an inconceivable load of sufferings necessarily lying upon him, which nothing short of almighty power could have encountered, and which nothing less than boundless grace could have submitted to endure: In these circumstances we may perceive with what propriety the apostle expresses himself when he says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins;" 1 John, iv. 10. And again, Rom. v. 7. 8. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And, says our Saviour himself, John, iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Intimating, that there was such a glorious display of divine grace and goodness in that provision which was made for fallen man, such exceeding riches belonging to it, that it was impossible to declare how eminent and illustrious it was: It was a love of such extent, of such height and depth, length and breadth, that it could by no means to any purpose be ascertained or defined, for it passeth all knowledge and comprehension.

10. We have hence in some sort ascertained the bitter nature of Christ's sufferings. When we understand that *the wages of sin is death*, and that this is the case as to every transgression; when we recollect the innumerable sins with which every individual is chargeable, and that Christ suffered the vengeance due to an innumerable company, all whose sins he had laid upon him; when we take into consideration the nature and extent of that death which is annexed to every transgression, and sum up the whole

whole in our minds ; though it is absolutely impossible to conceive the tremendous amount, yet thus much we have ascertained beyond a doubt, that those sufferings which he had to endure, and which he actually endured, were bitter and severe in the most supereminent degree, and that what the prophet expresses, might well be adopted by Jesus, as pointing out his situation when suffering. " Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger." Well might he cry out under the agonizing exertions of divine indignation, while his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." For his sickness, his sorrow, was not only unto death, but in all the extremity, not merely of death in the singular or abstract, but of deaths in the most enlarged and compounded form ; for he was suffering the innumerable deaths due to the innumerable sins of innumerable persons ; and the tremendous amount of this none but Jesus himself can declare, and this he sufficiently knew from painful experience.

11. We may hence discern how much those are indebted to Jesus, who through him are made to experience freedom from that death which is the wages of their sin. When we consider the nature and extent of that death which is the wages of sin ; when we recollect in how many instances, even till they are past reckoning, that these wages have been earned, and of course should have been rendered in exact proportion to such ; when we contemplate how unequal these were to accomplish their deliverance, as being both unable and unwilling for the work ; when we attend to that depth of distress from which these have been raised, and that height of happiness to which they are advanced in the en-

joyment of eternal life, as the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we say, when all this is viewed, we may clearly discern, that the debt of gratitude and praise which such lie under to our Lord Jesus Christ is immensely, inconceivably great, that it is such as cannot ever be discharged; for the utmost return that either can be proposed or attained to, is just to declare the exceeding riches of divine grace in his kindness towards them, to confess themselves eternal debtors to it; and while doing so, aim at shewing forth the honour of Jehovah's name, and making his praise glorious, saying with those in Rev. v. 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

In the *last* place, We have afforded us a display of the amazing nature of that long-suffering patience and forbearance which is exercised towards guilty sinners: We may learn how sufficiently justified God, the righteous Judge, is in the full execution of his vengeance upon guilty sinners at last. If *the wages of every sin is death*, and if, by innumerable repeated transgressions we at once incur, and upon the matter invite the execution of that wrath and vengeance upon ourselves; we say, while this is the case, and also considering that Jehovah, however much dishonoured and provoked, does not immediately proceed to render us those wages which we have earned, at least in their full amount, but supercedes this for a time, exercises his patience, his forbearance for a season, giving us thus a respite, time and space to repent, and even pressing this upon us in opposition to all the abuse and misimprovement of his kindness with which we are chargeable: In these circumstances have we not afforded a most illustrious display of the amazing nature of that long-suffering patience and forbearance which is exercised by God towards sinners? It must be divine,

vine, otherwise it would have been extinguished almost as soon as it had existed, considering what it had to overcome.

But as we have a display of the amazing nature of that divine patience and forbearance, so also we may learn how sufficiently justified God will be in the full execution of judgement upon ungodly sinners at last. If *the wages of sin is death*; if these wages are explicitly stated in the word of God as annexed to such work; if it is the original inviolable appointment of Heaven, that thus it shall be; if there is an exact proportion betwixt the work and the wages; if, besides all this, the matter has been, in the most explicit terms, proposed and made known to such; and not only so, but even either explicitly or implicitly accepted of, and agreed to on the part of the sinner: In these circumstances certainly God must be just in all the condemnation and punishment which he may inflict upon impenitent transgressors. Their own consciences will fully acquit him of all blame, and allow that he is only rendering to them according to their deeds: For the Judge of all the earth, either in works of mercy or judgement, cannot but do the thing that is right. He is just when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth.

Before taking our leave of this subject, we would beseech all to consider that you are sinners both by nature and practice. This is a character which without exception belongs to every individual of the human race. Though there may be some more and some less guilty, yet there is not one that doeth good and sinneth not. The more that persons are attentive to, and acquainted with themselves, the more disposed will they be to take with the character: For iniquities, even the best must confess, do prevail against them. We would beg of you to attend seriously to the nature and demerit of sin.

Though too common with all, yet this does not render it either a safe or an honourable practice. It is at once an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the Lord, and to transgress his holy law. Beware of verging even to a thinking or speaking lightly of sin; and still more of indulging yourselves freely in evil-doing. Impress upon your minds the defiling, the dishonouring nature and high demerit of sin: and that you both may have proper views of sin, and be rightly exercised in watching and warring against it, be in earnest for the holy Spirit; for it is only when spiritually enlightened that persons can have a just discernment of themselves or their ways. It is only those who have the Spirit in them, and at work with them, that can put off the old man with his deeds, that mortify those members which are on the earth. We would exhort each diligently to look to their ways. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. It is a matter of the last importance that your footsteps be ordered aright. In the whole of your conduct, ye are under the cognizance of the law, that law which is holy, just, and good; and which, though originally given for life, yet worketh death to the sinner. Whenever the law is transgressed, guilt is incurred, and this guilt binds over to punishment. The wages of sin, of every sin, is death. Consider this! Oh consider this, ye workers of iniquity! Ye that profane God's name and day, that wallow in uncleanness, or that are given up to intemperance, be assured the end of such things is death. This is an issue which is at once most tremendous and terrible, and yet altogether inevitable. Consider this, ye that forget God, that are careless and unconcerned as to the power of godliness. Though ye may have the form of religion, and a name to live before men,

men, you will in your dire experience find, if you continue in this state and character, the certainty of this awful truth; for to such at that day, Jehovah the just Judge will say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you. In one word, let each one be much exercised in searching out and lamenting over those manifold evils with which you are chargeable; and bless God for the glorious propitiation for sin which he has provided. While the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We would urge you to make your escape from sin, and from the wrath to come; and to this end, we would lift up, in the offer of the gospel, the Redeemer, who is come to Sion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. He is mighty to save; he waits that he may be gracious; he is saying, behold me, behold me; look unto me, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else. Improve him then as need requires. You need much from him; and all fulness dwells in and with him. He is full of grace and truth. Open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it.

S E R M O N XV.

LUKE, xxiv. 26.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things? —

THough with the carnal mind and the worldly man, Christ be as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness; yet to such as believe, as possess the spiritual discernment, he is indeed precious, the chief among ten thousand, yea altogether lovely. What serves to commend him to their esteem and affection, is not only his own intrinsic excellence and surpassing beauty, for he is white and ruddy, fairer than the sons of men, but also his great love towards them, with the unparalleled expressions of it which he has afforded: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." But, says the apostle, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us:" "He poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors." He reckoned no service too great, or suffering too exquisite, if either the one or the other was subservient to accomplish his gracious designs, and demonstrate how much he loved us. But though he was thus profuse in his services, in the expressions of his kindness towards us, yet it was in wisdom, and not without reason, that he was so. There was

no service he performed, but what in itself was useful to some important end. There was not a single instance of suffering to which he submitted, but what was in every respect becoming his character, and absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of that work which was given him to do. In agreeableness to which is what we have expressly stated by Christ himself in our text.

In the beginning of this chapter, we have an account as to the anxiety of some women, and the disciples, in relation to Christ's resurrection, with the intimation that was given them concerning it. From the 13th verse, we are presented with the history of the proceedings of two disciples in particular, and what occurred to them in their journeyings. Either upon business, or from some other motive, they were going towards Emmaus, which was a small village, distant from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. As they went, their chief employ was in converse about those things which had lately happened. When thus engaged, they were joined by Jesus himself, who drew near to them, and went with them; but their eyes were for the present holden, that they should not know him. Jesus instantly addressed them with an inquiry in these terms: "What manner of communications are these which ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?" To this inquiry, one of them, whose name was Cleopas, readily made answer, expressing his surprise at his ignorance, alledging, that he must be a stranger in Jerusalem. Jesus still persisting in his inquiry, the disciple proceeded to narrate their present distressed situation, with the grounds that produced it. To this affecting account which the disciple rendered, Jesus made a reply from the 25th verse; and, after blaming them for their folly, their unbelief, their being dull and slow of heart to apprehend and acquiesce

quiesce in all that the prophets had spoken concerning Christ; in our text, for their correction and instruction, he addresses them with a question, which if rightly understood and improved, would serve in a great degree to rectify present misapprehensions, and release from present discouragements; *Ought not Christ to suffer these things?* The import of which question may be thus expressed. "Ye are for the present indeed in a distressed and
"disconsolate condition; but your being so is en-
"tirely owing to yourselves. Ye are fools, and slow
"of heart to believe, unwilling to listen to the
"prophets, or derive from them that instruction
"and consolation which they afford you, other-
"wise you could neither think nor express your-
"selves after the manner you have done. Recol-
"lect yourselves therefore. Consider the matter
"seriously, and you will quickly discern your mis-
"take. All that ignominy, and those sufferings,
"which Jesus your Saviour and friend has endu-
"red, however exquisite in their nature, however
"distressing they might be to you, were in them-
"selves absolutely necessary; nay, an entire sub-
"mission to them, in all their agony and extent,
"was actually engaged to in the eternal under-
"taking. It is owing to your ignorance of the
"glorious personage with whom you stand con-
"nected, your misapprehensions as to his proper
"character and office, that your minds are so
"ready to recoil at the treatment he has met with.
"Did you discern who he is; what his character
"and office is? Did you attend to him as the
"Christ, the anointed Saviour; he upon whom
"the help of an elect world was laid? Were these
"the views you were forming in relation to him?
"Though his sufferings might excite your wonder,
"and inflame your love, yet you would by no
"means remonstrate against, or repine on account

of them; you would rather rejoice in this tribulation, knowing that the glorious issue in your experience, would be that joy and peace which is in believing. You would soon perceive the propriety, the importance, the indispensable necessity of all that has taken place. Even submitting matters to your cool and dispassionate decision, say if, according to the Scriptures, the import of the character which Jesus sustained, the nature of that undertaking in which he had engaged, and the important ends which were by it to be accomplished; say, was there not in consequence an absolute necessity for, an indispensable obligation lying upon him, to submit to all that service and suffering which he endured, without which he could not have glorified himself, or brought relief to a guilty world? *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?* What we have in view from this subject is,

I. To consider the nature of Christ's sufferings;

II. To instruct their necessity.

III. To make some improvement.

I. It is proposed to consider the nature of Christ's sufferings. This is a subject which in a particular manner deserves to be inquired into and understood, it demands our most sedulous attention. But alas! how little of it do we at best know! Our apprehensions are but very indistinct; and our expressions must be still more inadequate in relation to it. The following observations will comprehend what we have to offer upon this point; and may the Lord, the Spirit, take these things of Christ's, and shew them to us in their proper energy and importance. — We observe,

1. That he submitted to the deepest abasement. That Christ was abased is unquestionable. The depth

depth of abasement to which the eternal Son of God submitted; when acting as our surety, it is impossible to be defined by finite comprehension or expression. As we cannot reach that height of glory which essentially belongs to him, so neither can we penetrate into that depth of abasement to which he descended. The Scriptures give us some account of the matter, accommodated to our weak and limited capacities, and point it out to be truly great. Though the supreme, the independent, the self-existent Jehovah, he for a time, if we may so express ourselves, threw aside the robes of his divinity, and veiled his essential glory; he left the bosom of the Father, that ineffable complacency and delight which he enjoyed there; was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; the children being made partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same. Though the mighty God, and the Father of eternity, yet he condescended to be the child born, the Son given, an infant of days. This was not all, for he not only became man, but a mean man, one despised and rejected of men. Instead of possessing a distinguished, respectable character in this lower order of creation, he made himself of no reputation, was as a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. Besides, he was subject to all the frailties, the infirmities, incident to humanity; he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Nor was this the most humiliating circumstance to which he submitted. Though he sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be, though the Prince of the kings of the earth; though the supreme Ruler and sovereign Lawgiver; yet he abased himself, and appeared in the form of a servant, was made under the law, to redeem them that were under it. He became a subject and

servant

servant to his own law, both as to its precept and penalty; nay, as if all this had been insufficient to produce that depth of abasement to which he must submit, he also humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: Not only did he appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, but also, though he knew no sin, he suffered himself to be made sin, to be constituted the sinner. The holy One of Israel was considered and dealt with as a most grievous transgressor; upon him met all past reckoning, even the sins of a whole elect world. Though the earth was, and is his, and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; yet the glorious Redeemer submitted to the being an alien, an outcast, to be oppressed and afflicted, and at last to be brought to the dust of death. Attending, therefore, even to the several circumstances which have been represented, for the whole cannot be declared, was it not the deepest abasement to which he submitted?

2. He was reproached, reviled, and maltreated, by men. Instead of meeting with that reception which the importance of his errand and the benevolence of his intention demanded and deserved, alas, he suffered the utmost abuse and oppression from the sons of men. Though he came upon the gracious design of seeking and saving them that were lost, and was inexpressibly condescending to all such as gave him employment; though he was ever accessible by those who stood in need of his assistance, and waited that he might be gracious; yet himself and his salvation were set at nought by the greater part; they would by no means have him to reign over them; nay, such was their alienation from, their enmity against him, that they besought him to depart out of their coasts. Not only did he suffer neglect, and meet with no entertainment from them; as if this was not enough,

they poured all that contempt upon him of which they were capable; they traduced and reviled him, as if he had been the vilest malefactor; nay, as if he was even the veriest dregs of the people. They rated him as a gluttonous man, as a wine-bibber; nay, they affirmed of him that he was in compact with Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and that it was by his power he did cast out devils. There was nothing so evil or infamous which they did not impute to him. But their malignity, and his sufferings arising thence, did not stop here; not only did they reproach and revile him, but they even also actually maltreated him; he endured much contradiction and opposition from them. They persecuted him from his cradle to his grave. No sooner was he born than Herod sought to slay him. In consequence, he had to be an exile from his native country, and an alien among his people. Soon as he entered upon his actual ministry, the hand of violence was raised against him, and in one shape or other incessantly pursued him. He was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, and often obliged to shift for his safety. His enemies were numerous, and subtly malicious; they anxiously thirsted for his blood, and were ever lying in wait to destroy him. At length, when the hour of darkness arrived, and he was for a season delivered into their power, how did their fury blaze forth against him! They treated him with the utmost indignity, with the most unexampled cruelty; they declared him to be the most infamous criminal that ever existed. Barabbas, though notorious for injustice, oppression, and every evil, was innocent when in competition with the lovely Jesus. Hence, as if filled with the deepest abhorrence of his impiety, they vehemently cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas; away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." Though there was
no

no fault to be found in him, they condemned him, and with wicked hands slew him. They cast all the ignominy upon him possible, for they adjudged him to the accursed death of the cross: He was hanged on a tree; and they placed him betwixt two notorious malefactors; as if he had been more infamous than either. Their invention was upon the rack in order to torment and distress him: He was scourged, buffeted, obliged to bear his cross, and at length crucified, which was a death the most painful whatever. They added the basest insult to the most grievous oppression; and in short, by every exertion they were capable of, attempted to increase his sufferings. They put a crown of thorns upon his head, attired him with a scarlet robe, and furnished him with a reed for a sceptre, mock ensigns of royalty. In derision they bowed the knee before him, they spat upon his face, and even smote him with the palms of their hands. To add to his affliction, when tormented with a most intense thirst, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink, which would rather increase than allay it. In one word, when in the very extremity of suffering, when the rocks were rent, and the sun withdrew his shining, yet still their enemy pursued him; those who passed by wagged their heads at him; the people, with the rulers, derided him; the soldiers mocked him; and one of the malefactors railed at him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

But however great his sufferings from men were, as has been represented, these are not the whole of what he endured from this quarter: He was maltreated both by friends and foes; and the treatment he met with from friends, was no less painful, if not more so, than all those torments which were inflicted upon him by his inveterate adversaries. From an enemy we can look for little other

than insult and oppression, and accordingly usually lay our account with it. But from a friend our expectations are very different. If really such, the more we need his sympathy, the greater confidence have we that we shall share it. A friend indeed is one in time of need. Therefore, when in extremity we flatter ourselves with some alleviation of our distress, arising from that support which friendship may afford. If disappointed in this, more especially if it can be rendered, this certainly will be the bitterest ingredient in affliction, and will inexpressibly aggravate our distress. Well, this was what Christ in an eminent degree experienced. Though he had some friends among men, whose sympathy and support might in part have comforted him amidst the cruel usage he was meeting with from his enemies, yet this was wholly denied him. Though with him in the easiest parts of his sufferings, yet, when in the extremity of trouble, and their friendship was most necessary, it was then most distant and defective. Nay, so far from being friendly towards him, they were quite the reverse: One of his disciples betrayed him; another denied him; they all forsook him, and were far from helping him. This was what Jesus foresaw; and hence, in prophetic language, thus poured out his complaint: "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore: and my kinsmen stand afar off. They also that seek after my life, lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt, speak mischiefous things, and imagine deceits all the day long." Psalm xxxviii. 11. 12. as also consult Psalm xli. 5.—10.

3. The whole artillery of hell was displayed and levelled against Christ. Men and devils combined their influence to harass and distress him. Nothing on their part was unattempted, which in their apprehension was subservient to this design. The powers

powers of darkness were in an especial manner set against him. This was nothing more than was to be expected. As the Son of God was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil; as his great end in coming into our world, was to spoil principalities and powers, to make a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross; it was naturally to be supposed that they would exert their utmost to defeat the glorious design, and distress their adversary. Accordingly, all the subtilty of hell was employed; all its malignity was displayed; and every possible exertion was put forth to add affliction to the afflicted, if they could not accomplish his final destruction. Having no inward principle of corruption to assist and render effectual the operations of the powers of darkness, their attacks were more especially pointed against the outward man. But even that nothing might be left untried, an attempt was made by them to pollute his holy soul. No sooner did he enter upon his work than he was carried by the devil into the wilderness, and was there tempted of him forty days. After this expedient proved abortive, and Jesus came forth from the furnace as gold seven times purified, and so more qualified for the work that was given him to do, the devil left him for a season. But though he ceased his attacks in this way, yet he did not desist from other attempts to distress and disturb him: he and his emissaries were ever lying in wait for, and seeking after opportunities of destroying him: when one stratagem failed, they had recourse to a different one; and, in short, were incessantly employed in devising one method or other by which to accomplish, if possible, their hellish designs.

Snare were prepared for him in which to catch him; dangers were devised in which to involve him; the most formidable obstructions and difficulties

culties were thrown in his way, so as to interrupt
 his progress and impede his operations; enemies
 were raised up against him, and their numbers, their
 influence, and their enmity were daily increased.
 In short, no engine was unemployed, no instru-
 ment was suffered to be inactive, which the powers
 of darkness could prevail upon to engage in their
 designs. The conflict between the Redeemer and
 them was sharp and strong: it was uninterrupted
 and unceasing. The malignity of hell exerted itself
 in all that variety of sufferings which he endured
 from men; and it was not satisfied till it brought
 him to the dust of death, when, in their apprehen-
 sion, his destruction was completed. "But he took
 the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel
 of the froward was carried headlong." "By dy-
 ing he destroyed death, and him that had the
 power of death, that is, the devil." and now old
 4. Christ endured the wrath and indignation of
 a sin-revenging God in the whole of its tremen-
 dous energy. He not only submitted to the deepest
 abasement; he was reproached and maltreated by
 the sons of men; he also had all the powers of
 darkness set in array, and exerting the utmost of
 their malignity against him. But all this, though
 truly distressing, was not the chief ingredient in
 that cup which was given him to drink. There was
 something infinitely more dreadful belonging to
 it. The wrath and indignation of the Almighty
 was not only pointed against him, but without
 mixture and without measure poured out unto
 him. It was this which chiefly pierced him, and
 gave a poignancy to all his other sufferings; for
 it diffused itself through the whole. As repre-
 senting a whole elect world, and bearing their ini-
 quities, he necessarily had inflicted upon him the
 just demerit of their transgressions; he suffered the
 full penalty incurred by their offences! And what

is the demerit of sin? Nothing less than the wrath and vengeance of Jehovah. What the full extent of, what the power of divine indignation is, none but Jesus himself can declare, and this he well knew from painful experience: For he drank up the cup of the father's wrath from brim to bottom; He was eminently a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: He was born to trouble; was persecuted by men and devils from the cradle even to the cross. The terrors of the Almighty were all along set in array against, and pursuing him. Though this was the case during the whole of his continuance on earth, yet it was more remarkably so towards the close of his, when that dreadful scene commenced, which Christ himself emphatically points out as the hour and power of darkness. At this period, how complicated, how intense, how extreme, how inexpressible were his sufferings! He endured the full punishment due to our offences: he underwent both the pain of loss, and the pain of sense. The light of his Father's countenance was sensibly withdrawn from him, so that, in the anguish of his spirit, he had to cry out, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" The wrath and vengeance of the Almighty with the greatest fury flashed forth against him: It not only seized upon his body, but also his soul was tormented in the wine-press of God's indignation: he felt the most exquisite pain in both. The arrows of the Almighty were around and within him; the poison thereof drank up his Spirit. What anguish did he experience in the garden of Gethsemane, when "he began to be amazed and very heavy; when he was in an agony; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground!" What unutterable agonies did he endure when upon the cross; and the fury of men; the malignity of the powers of darkness; with the wrath and vengeance of

of a sin-revenging God, in all their tremendous energy, met and spent their utmost upon him; when the sorrows of death encompassed him; and the pains of hell got hold upon him; and he knew, in the full extent of the expression, trouble and sorrow. His sufferings were then so great, that under their pressure he was obliged to cry out, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Language is inadequate to express, nay, the imagination is incapable of conceiving, the full amount of what Christ suffered, when acting as the under-taking surety of a better testament. We have afforded some hints, but they can be considered as no more: for who knoweth the power of divine anger.—Having said thus much, as to what Christ suffered; in relation to the nature of his sufferings, we have to observe,

5. That they were most severe and exquisite. This may be collected from what has already been stated. When we have before us what Christ suffered, it must be obvious that his sufferings were most severe and exquisite: they were both enlarged in their nature, and at the same time most intense and excruciating: In this respect they were altogether unparalleled. Even the sufferings which devils and damned spirits in hell shall be subject to through eternity, are not once to be compared with the sufferings of the Redeemer; for however extreme those are, they are vastly exceeded by these. In the one instance, there are only the wages due to one sinner rendered; for each bear their own iniquity: whereas, in the other, the sins and the wages of a whole elect world at once met upon, and completely exhausted themselves in him: and this being the case, his sufferings could not fail to be inexpressibly severe and exquisite. He suffered, as has already been observed, both in his body and in his

his soul; and in both these his sufferings were most poignant. The sufferings of his body were most severe, and were heightened by the keenness of that sensibility which he enjoyed, and which with him was truly great. They were universal; not one member or part was exempted. To add to the severity of these sufferings, they were incessant; not the least respite was given, or abatement allowed; and his situation was still more distressing, in that the sufferings of the body were unrelieved, unalleviated, by the better part. Instead of this, he suffered in his soul as well as in his body; and his soul sufferings, if we may so express ourselves, were the soul, the extremity of his sufferings: He had poured out upon him the full flood of the pure unmixed wrath of a sin-revenging God; and this could not fail to produce feelings the most severe and exquisite. We have a most affecting account given of this matter in prophetic language, and which serves to confirm what has been now stated. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potherb: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws: and thou hast brought me into the dust of death," Ps. xlii. 14. 15.

6. They were in the whole extent of them most just. This should in an especial manner be understood, when thinking or speaking of Christ's sufferings. However enlarged or severe these were, yet they were nothing other, no more than what in justice should have been inflicted. Both the slightest, and the severest part of these sufferings, nay, the whole of them, of whatever nature or kind, were all of them fully warranted. This will readily be admitted, if we consider the nature of the offence subjecting to these sufferings, the party inflicting, and the party submitting to endure them. If we attend

attend to the nature of the offence subjecting to this situation, the evil nature, the deep malignity, and high demerit of sin, the wages of which is death: If we also recollect, that ill past reckoning were laid upon him; then we have afforded the best grounds to proceed upon, in acknowledging, that his sufferings, however grievous and complicated, were all of them what in justice might be inflicted. If we consider the party inflicting these sufferings, still the conclusion must be, that the whole was done in truth, in righteousness, and in judgement. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do the thing that is right. Though men and devils had no right of themselves to insult and oppress the Redeemer, yet as instruments in God's hands, acting under his permission, over-ruled by him to pursue his quarrel against sin, even these sufferings were also just on God's part, however great guiltiness these instruments were chargeable with in inflicting them. We find Christ himself stating matters expressly in this point of view. When about to be apprehended and brought before Pilate, which was to issue in his condemnation, death, and burial; and the disciples, as desirous to prevent all this, were in some sort exerting themselves, he checked them with observing, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that *thus it must be*?" *Matth. xxvi. 53, 54.* And to the same purpose is what we have in our text: for what Christ expresses in both places, is to be viewed, not merely as pointing out the necessity, but also the justice of such a dispensation; and the one could not possibly be unless the other also existed. In short, had there not been strict justice in all that Christ suffered, it would by no means have been submitted to on his part: He was superior to a being injured.

injured. Had not justice required it of him, as what was fully due in the character and capacity under which he acted, he would not have yielded to suffering. Hence, in every part of his service and suffering, he thus accounts for it; represents that in the whole, he was fulfilling the righteous claims of justice upon him, acting always as became the Christ. "Thus it becometh me to fulfil all righteousness." "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

They are the sufferings of a divine person, and so are of infinite value and efficacy. This also must, in a particular manner, be under consideration when thinking or speaking upon this subject; for unless this be admitted, their importance and usefulness immediately cease. As language is very imperfect when employed upon so sublime a subject, and so deep a mystery, it is proper we observe, that when we state that the sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of a divine person, we do not mean to insinuate or express that as God, or in his divine nature, he suffered; for this was altogether impossible: But then, considering that near union which the human nature had to the divine, by the wonderful constitution of his person, and that the actions of both natures were attributed to his divine person, and not to that nature from which these actions might more immediately proceed; we say, on this account his sufferings are to be considered under this view: For though the human nature only was capable of suffering and service, yet it was not the nature, strictly speaking, that suffered and served, but the person of our Immanuel in that nature; a nature not being a subject capable of yielding obedience to the laws precept and penalty, but a person. Accordingly, though the divine nature was incapable of suffering, yet as it served to constitute

into the person of the man Christ Jesus who suffered; it gave a dignity, an efficacy to these sufferings, without which they would not have been sufficient to the end required. These sufferings, therefore, were the sufferings of a divine person, and so of infinite value. That this is the case is clear from Scripture. Thus the apostle, Acts, ix. 28. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Col. i. 14. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." In both which places we are expressly taught, that the sufferings of Christ which are pointed out to us by his blood, are the sufferings of a divine person; hence declared to be *the blood of God*.

8. They were in their nature propitiatory: They were such as effectually appeased God, and turned him from the fierceness of his anger, in relation to all those for whom these sufferings were endured. This in a particular manner claims our attention; the more so, as men of perverse minds, ignorant of themselves, of their ungodly deeds, as well as of God's righteousness, are going about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of Jesus; they will not give to these sufferings that glory which is their due; but insist, that however great and unparaleled they were, they can only at farthest serve as an example after which we are to copy, when enduring those sufferings which may be measured out to us. Were this the fact, what a gloomy prospect would open to us! How precarious, nay, how impracticable, would the salvation of every person be! If the wrath of God has not terminated, and, if we may so express ourselves, entirely spent itself upon Christ, so as that those whom he represented, and for whom he acted, do not stand exposed to the least drop of vindictive vengeance; they must of all

men be most miserable! They must have this wrath still to endure! Divine justice must in one way or other be satisfied. If Christ has not been made a curse, so as to redeem from the curse of the law, what other can all have to expect, than a fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation ready to devour the adversary! Blessed be God, a more comfortable prospect is opened up to us from the death and sufferings of the glorious Redeemer.

These sufferings hath not only rendered God placable, as some condescendingly allow, to the end of our actually making our peace with him, but they are of a much higher, a more beneficial nature, and would not have profited us at all had not this been the case. They have actually appeased God; have reconciled and pacified him, so that fury is not in him, in relation to those for whom Christ acted. If, without prejudice, we attend to the matter, we will find that it is impossible it can be otherwise. Had not Christ been considered as a sinner, had he not been chargeable with grievous transgressions; it was impossible he could have been subject to sufferings; for suffering necessarily supposes sin; the one proceeds upon the footing of the other, as wages due to work. When, therefore, Christ suffered, and suffered as a sinner, while he had no sin of his own for which to suffer, it is clear that his sufferings must be of a propitiatory nature; must have the effect of delivering those whom he represented from that wrath and vengeance which they deserved to undergo, and of rendering God pacified towards them. If sin be that which set God and them at variance; and if Christ had taken their sins wholly upon himself, and has had rendered upon him the wages due in their full amount; if he has for them yielded an obedience in every respect corresponding to the law's demand, all which is most undoubted, the consequence is obvious, as has been stated: Divine justice cannot demand a double

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payment

payment for the same debt, or inflict a double punishment for the same offence. The surety having suffered, of necessity the original creditor must be acquitted from all claims, otherwise we must tax God with injustice and oppression, which with him is impossible. Besides, if the sufferings of Christ are not admitted as propitiatory, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to vindicate the divine rectitude in this part of conduct, more especially considering the extreme height to which they were carried. There is no other possible end which can be pointed out for which they can be subservient; for sufferings of a less severe nature would have been fully sufficient to have afforded an example, if this had been the only, or even the principal object in view. The fact is, there can be no just discernment of the nature and design of those sufferings, but when this conclusion is made in relation to them, that they are propitiatory. The volume of inspiration is express and clear in its testimony upon this head.—A variety of places might be quoted:—The following will suffice. The apostle declares, Rom. viii. 1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” his sufferings having had influence and efficacy to this end. Christ, says he, Gal. iv. 4. was “made under the law,” subject to its precept and penalty, that he might “redeem them that were under the law.” And hence, Gal. iii. 13. he adds, he “hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”—“He gave his life a ransom for many.”—“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” The sword of justice having awakened and exerted all its fury upon Christ, Jehovah henceforth looks with complacency upon him, and upon all in him: His anger being turned away from him, is in like manner turned away from them, and hence

hence he heals their backslidings, and loves them freely. By the blood of Jesus those who were sometimes afar off and enemies, are brought nigh and reconciled; for he hath "made peace, through the blood of his cross." They were and are exemplary. The sufferings of Christ afford us a pattern after which to copy, if we wish to exhibit a suitable deportment under sufferings. This, though not the principal, was a special end for which they were subservient. Thus the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 21. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." The Apostle James exhorts us, chapter v. 10. "Take, my brethren," says he, "the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." Their example, however, though useful, and what should be regarded by us, is by no means equal to that perfect pattern which is displayed before us in the sufferings of the glorious Redeemer; and therefore, if we would effectually attain to patience, resignation, fortitude, to a glorying in tribulation, we must "consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary, and faint in our minds," and conform ourselves to his great example, who, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Christ's deportment under his sufferings affords us instruction in various instances: his meekness, his patience, admonish us to exemplify these graces when we are in tribulation: his resignation to the divine will, his faith and his fortitude under his severest conflicts, point out to us how we in our measure should be exercised when passing under the rod: his compassionating the instruments of his sufferings, pitying and praying for them; his justifying God in all the severity of suffering that he had to endure; his

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penetrating

penetrating through the deep gloom and thick darkness of present awful dispensations, and encouraging himself by the glorious prospect which opened up itself in the affix, and which was every way sufficient to counteract his extreme anguish: We say, all this, in the most explicit terms, affords direction as to how we may support ourselves under sufferings, and may be animated to endure the heaviest conflict. In short, his willingness, his cheerfulness, nay, the delight he had in this hard service, is of use to instruct us with what readiness we should take up our cross, and how incumbent it is upon us to glory in tribulation. *They were vicarious: They were sufferings not for himself, or on his own account, but for others. This, in prophetic language, is expressly pointed out, Dan. ix. 26. "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself." He had no need of a righteousness for himself, for which it was incumbent upon him to serve; for he is essentially righteous: he had no sin of his own, and of course could not be subject to sufferings for himself; for he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: But though he knew no sin, yet he was made sin: the Lord laid on him the iniquities of an elect world. Being constituted the sinner, having taken upon himself the state and character of the guilty, he, in the nature of things, had to endure those sufferings which were essential to such a situation. While he was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, he, as their passover, had to be sacrificed for them; and having been made a curse for them, he redeems them from the curse of the law. Accordingly, all who have proper views of the sufferings of Christ, and are making a suitable improvement of them, will not only in general consider it*

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as an undoubted truth, that it was for the transgressions of an elect world that he was stricken; but also, they will aim at particular appropriating language upon this subject, according as the church was exercised, Isaiah, liii. Such will thus express themselves: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

They were most voluntary. The Redeemer in his sufferings was not merely acted upon, but was most active and voluntary throughout the whole: It was not of constraint, or through violence done him, that he suffered: this was impossible: the whole, if we may so express ourselves, was a free-will offering. This we have clearly stated in Scripture, particularly in Ps. xl. where the Redeemer thus speaks: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." While from eternity he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men; so, when the fullness of time was come, he readily made his appearance in our world, assumed our nature, was made of a woman, and made under the law. During his continuance on earth, he voluntarily gave his back to the smiters; his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: he hid not his face from shame and spitting. Even when the hour and power of darkness approached, and he had to endure trouble and sorrow in the extreme, yet how cheerful and forward was he in fulfilling his undertaking! "I have a baptism," said he, "to be baptized with, and how am I straitened

“till it be accomplished?” In short, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; he laid down his life of himself; he poured out his soul an offering for sin; he bowed the head; he gave up the ghost, and he said, It is finished.—We shall only add,

In the *last* place, that they were most necessary. Though the sufferings of the Redeemer were voluntary, yet they were at the same time most necessary; and there is not the smallest inconsistency betwixt the two; their necessity does not contradict their being a free-will offering on the part of Christ; for often that which is indispensably necessary, is freely rendered by such as have it in their power to do so. Nor does their being voluntary supersede their necessity; for that which in one view is voluntary, may in another be indispensably necessary, as is the case in the present instance. But to enlarge here would anticipate what belongs to the second head of discourse, to which we should now proceed; but this must be referred till another opportunity. We at present conclude with exhorting you to turn aside and behold this great sight, the bush burning and not consumed! Contemplate, we beseech you, with particular application to yourselves, the sufferings of the Redeemer. Behold him as by these taking away your sins, as having reconciled God to you; and rest assured, that as he who was dead is now alive, and shall live for ever more, so he will be careful to carry into execution the great end of his sufferings, his bringing many sons into glory: Because he lives, they shall live also.

“till it be accomplished.” In short, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; he laid down his life of himself; he poured out his blood for us; he bowed the head; he gave up the ghost, and he said, “We shall only add.”

In the last place, that there was most necessary. Though the sufferings were most necessary, yet they were at the same time most necessary; and there is not the least inconsistency between

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?—the being a free will offering on the part of Christ; for often that which is indispensably necessary, is freely rendered by him, as he has in him power to do so.

HAVING, in the preceding Discourse, offered some observations in relation to the nature of Christ's sufferings, we now go on, as was proposed,

H To instruct their necessity, — *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*—Before entering directly upon this part of our subject, it is proper we intimate, that when we assert, that there was a necessity for Christ's sufferings, we would not be understood as insinuating, that the eternal Son of God was under an absolute necessity of suffering, or was subject to this dispensation, independent of his having entered into an engagement to this effect. To suppose or assert this would be inconsistent with the truth of his divinity, and contradict his being the supreme, the independent, the self-existent Jehovah. It is only when viewed as the Christ; that the necessity for his services and sufferings appears; and as such, however severe and exquisite his sufferings were, yet it must be admitted that there was a glorious necessity lying upon him to endure these in all their extent and extremity; and this necessity may be thus instructed. It arises from the eternal fore-ordination

fore-ordination and appointment of Jehovah the Father to this end; his own voluntary engagement; and his unction and mission by the Holy Spirit. Besides, his sufferings were necessary, that the eternal purpose of grace might be rendered fully effectual; that the glory of the divine perfections might be illustriously displayed; that the honour of the divine law might be duly supported; that the greatness of divine love towards mankind might be explicitly manifested; that ancient prophecies and promises might be fulfilled; that Satan's kingdom and interests might be destroyed; that the evil nature and high demerit of sin might be proclaimed; that relief to a guilty elect world might be procured, and they in due time brought to the possession of those mansions which were prepared for them; and in short, that in this way Christ himself might enter into his glory, and be glorified with that glory which he had before the world began. — We say,

1. That there was a necessity for Christ's sufferings, arising from the fore-ordination and appointment of Jehovah the Father from all eternity. This is to be considered as a grand source of this dispensation, as what gave being to it. Known unto God are all things from the beginning. This, in an eminent manner, holds as to the sufferings of Christ. In the eternal counsel of peace, when the grand consultation was held, how in consequence of the foreseen ruin that was to befall the human race, and the dishonour that was to be cast upon God and his law by man's rebellion and disobedience; we say, when the grand consultation was held how this was to be repaired, Jehovah, in the person of the Father, not only raised up a chosen one, and laid help upon him that is mighty, he not only constituted the eternal Son in human nature, his honorary servant, the Christ, but also, at the same time, determined upon all that work

work and service which was to be performed by him while sustaining this character, and acting in this capacity. In these circumstances it was indispensably necessary that these sufferings should be realized: For the counsel of the Lord must stand, and all his pleasure must be fulfilled. In agreeableness to which, our Saviour and his apostles, when speaking of these sufferings, often turn our attention to this source, as at once accounting for, and rendering them necessary. To this purpose are these expressions by Christ himself, which intimate, that "he came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him;" that "as the Father gave him commandment, even so he did;" "that he had work given him to finish;" "that his enemies could have no power at all against him, unless it were given them from above;" "that his hour was not yet come." The apostles are, if possible, still more explicit upon the subject; they speak of his being "fore-ordained as a propitiation;" they point him out as "the lamb slain, from the foundation of the world;" and, in short, testify, that the whole of what he suffered, was according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," a fulfilment of whatsoever the divine counsel had before determined to be done; Rom. iii. 25.; 1 Pet. i. 20.; Rev. xiii. 8.; Acts, ii. 23. iv. 28. All which expressions clearly ascertain, that the divine fore-ordination and appointment had a special influence upon, and was efficaciously productive of all that Christ had to endure through the whole course of his service and sufferings, and that in this respect a necessity was lying upon him to submit to them.

2. There was a necessity for Christ's sufferings, arising from his own voluntary engagement in an undertaking to this extent. When thinking and speaking of the eternal Son's being fore-ordained

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and set up from everlasting as the surety of a better testament; and so subject to all the consequences of that office and character; we must never lose sight of this, that in the whole he was most voluntary. He not only was constituted and set up from everlasting as the one Mediator betwixt God and man, but also cheerfully acquiesced in the appointment, and even actually engaged in all that was proposed and prescribed to him. The one could not possibly have been gone into, unless the other had also at the same time existed; and, while all this must be admitted, it must follow, that as there was a necessity lying upon him to serve and suffer, from the divine fore-ordination and appointment, there was no less a necessity arising from his own personal engagement in an undertaking to this end. An engagement, whatever the nature of it be, when entered into by a person of truth and honour, is always considered as laying an indispensable obligation upon him to fulfil it, in so far as is in his power, whatever trouble or expence his doing so may incur. And certainly in the present instance it may be allowed, that it had, and was considered as what had the fullest force and obligation. That a doubt might not be entertained upon this head, we have it expressly ascertained, both that such an engagement was actually entered into by Christ, and also that it was duly regarded. To this purpose is what we have represented, Ps. xl. before quoted. Such regard had the Redeemer to this his engagement, that when actually fulfilling it, he brings it often in review before him, that by doing so, he, as it were, might suitably impress both others and himself with the obligation arising thence to do all that he did. Hence, when proposing to be baptized, and John declined doing it, Jesus urged him with observing, "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh me to fulfil all righteousness." And he afterwards expressed himself

himself still more explicitly: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" In which words, he utters the language of one who was labouring under an indispensable engagement which he was not only willing, but even anxiously in earnest to regard, and honourably fulfil.

3. There was a necessity for Christ's suffering arising from his unction and mission by the Holy Spirit. As the eternal Son becoming the Christ was not merely the device of one of the persons of the adorable Trinity, but properly the joint work of the undivided Three; so in that work, while the whole of what was done was done by all the Three, yet there was, as it were, certain parts of the work which were properly performed by the different persons of the Trinity in their economical characters and administrations. Thus the foreknowledge of, the appointment, the constitution of the eternal Son to this work and office, is represented as the province of Jehovah in the person of the Father. The acceptance of this character and office, and an engaging in this undertaking, is pointed out as peculiar to Jehovah the eternal Son; and the qualifying for, consecrating, and ushering him forwards to this work and office, is ascribed as the proper work of the ever-blessed Spirit. Well, as there was an obligation lying upon Jesus, in virtue of the Father's appointment and his own voluntary engagement, so there was no less a necessity arising from his unction and mission by the Holy Spirit: For Jehovah, the Father, Son, and Spirit, can do nothing in vain. Jesus having been by the eternal Spirit actually anointed and set apart to the work and office of Mediator; having been sufficiently qualified for, and actually brought forwards to an entering upon a discharge of it, in regard he had the Spirit given him without measure, was anointed with the oil

veil of gladness above his fellows, there was doubt-
 less, in consequence of all this, an indispensable
 obligation lying upon him to finish the work that
 was given him to do. The Holy Spirit's design in
 this instance had to be honoured; his gifts and in-
 fluences were not to be trifled with, or squandered
 away. What they were subservient to, and that for
 which they were vouchsafed, must, without fail, be
 accomplished; and therefore Christ was under an
 indispensable obligation to go through the whole
 of that service and suffering which was marked out
 for him, and for which he was thus qualified. Thus
 we see that, to support the honour, and follow forth
 the operations of a Trinity of persons, Father, Son,
 and Spirit, one Jehovah, there was a necessary, a
 glorious necessity, lying upon Christ to suffer these
 things:—But this is not all; we have to ob-
 serve,

4. That the sufferings of Christ were necessary,
 that through them the eternal purpose of grace, in
 regard to the sons of men, might be rendered fully
 effectual. Jehovah having from all eternity fore-
 seen that man would deal treacherously, would re-
 bel against him, and in consequence would involve
 the whole of mankind, as represented by him, in
 guilt and misery; he, notwithstanding of this, from
 the same early period entertained a purpose of
 grace and good will towards a select number of
 these: And having done so, it was absolutely ne-
 cessary that some method or other should be devised
 by which this eternal purpose would be rendered
 effectual. That some method or other was neces-
 sary through which the eternal purpose might take
 effect, is unquestionable. It would be inconsistent
 with every becoming view of the divine being, once
 to suppose, that however much disposed he was to
 display his mercy towards rebellious men, yet that
 he either could or would do so but in a way ho-
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nourable to himself, with a due regard to the glory of his other perfections, as well as the claims of his injured law. A God all mercy, would be a God unjust; in other words, would not be God. As in common life it will be allowed, that before persons with propriety can be generous to others, they must be just to themselves; much more must it be granted, that the Judge of all the earth, who cannot but do the thing that is right, must, and ever will in all his procedure be strictly attentive to what is his due. As therefore from these considerations it is evident that the eternal purpose of grace neither could nor was intended to take effect but as proceeding upon a solid foundation, subservient to this end; the inquiry of course arises, what was that method which was devised and determined upon through which mercy might abound to the chief of sinners? If we consult the sacred volume, it is obvious that the service and sufferings of the glorious Redeemer were pitched upon as the grand expedient for this purpose. Hence, in Ps. lxxxix, when Jehovah had said, "Mercy shall be built up for ever," it is immediately subjoined as expressive of the glorious method and channel through which grace was to reign, "I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one chosen out of the people: I have found David my servant." In like manner, when the jubilee trumpet is sounded, "Deliver from going down to the pit," the glorious foundation of this release is intimated, "I have found a ransom." For God spared not his own son, but delivered him up, that with and through him he might freely give us all things. This then being the case, that the service, the sufferings of Christ, were the glorious channel through which the eternal purpose could be rendered effectual, it is evident they were highly neces-

sary in this view. Had they not been realized, mercy could never have abounded towards the chief of sinners: Had not the sword of justice awakened against Christ the shepherd, the man God's fellow, the hand of mercy could never have been turned towards the little ones.

5. These sufferings were necessary that the glory of the divine perfections might in this way be illustriously manifested. The highest end in all actions is, at least ought to be, the glory of God: Jehovah himself does all things for his own glory. Where-ever, therefore, the glory of God may most illustriously be advanced, certainly a special obligation lies upon persons to attend upon what is subservient to this important end. This being the case, certainly the sufferings of Christ must be considered as highly necessary. We do not say, though it perhaps may be proper enough to affirm it, that it was necessary that the divine glory should be illustrated in this manner, as being the most eminent way in which it could be displayed. This is among the deep things of God, into which it is not our province too anxiously to pry: we, however, have all confidence in asserting, that as it was beyond question the divine will and pleasure thus to display his glory, the sufferings of Christ were indispensably necessary, that this his will and purpose in relation to himself might be effected; and we may add, that there was the greater propriety in, and a more urgent necessity for an illustrious display of the divine glory in all his essential perfections, that such repeated attempts had been made by his creatures, both angels and men, to sully their lustre and tarnish their brightness. While the sufferings of Christ were necessary in this view, it is at the same time to be observed, that there never was, and it is probable never will be any thing which is more calculated to display the glory of God in the most illustrious manner

manner than these: in and by them the whole of the divine perfections shine forth with unparalleled effulgence and resplendent glory. Thus, for instance, the divine holiness never appeared so illustrious, or was his hatred, his abhorrence of sin ever so strongly expressed, as in the sufferings of Christ; for if sin could ever have passed without a reckoning, surely God would have spared his eternal, his well beloved, his only begotten Son, and not delivered him up to the death. Divine justice never was so tremendous or terrible in its aspect as when the summons was issued forth to the avenging sword to awake against the man that is God's fellow, and to smite him. If God could have continued just, and the sinner suffered to remain finally unpunished, then, doubtless, the sword of justice would never have sheathed itself in his bowels, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. Divine faithfulness never displayed itself with more awful dignity than when executing the threatening upon the glorious surety; for if God could have remained faithful while the threatening was not to take effect against the guilty transgressor, without question the cup of sufferings would not have been put into his hands to wring out its bitter dregs. Divine goodness never assumed such an engaging form, or displayed such exceeding riches as belonging to it, till we beheld it reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ. The height, the depth, the length, the breadth of divine love and kindness towards the sons of men would never have been so conspicuous, had it not been the amazing channel through which it flowed.

6. The sufferings of Christ were necessary, that the honour of the divine law might be duly supported. By the rebellion of the angels, and man's disobedience, the law of God had been grievously violated, the utmost dishonour had been cast upon it,

it, so that it had not that respect which was its due. But this is what Jehovah the lawgiver would by no means suffer. The honour of the law was as dear to him as his own, for they were inseparably connected. Accordingly, to have the injury which was done to the law repaired, and its honour duly supported, were objects which he could not fail to have much upon his heart; and in order to accomplish all this, nothing less was necessary than the service and sufferings of the Redeemer. Creatures though they were in so far capable to support the honour of the law by a perfect obedience to its requirements, as is the case with the angels who kept their first estate, yet they were incapable to make reparation for the injuries sustained; but without the whole of this, the law's honour could not be duly supported. In the case of the human race, who were universally involved in transgression, there was no possibility of the law being supported in its honour by them as left to themselves, farther than by suffering the penalty which was incurred; and as the penalty could not ever be sufficiently inflicted upon them, the law's honour, as to one order of creation, could not have been sufficiently maintained, if no other method had been devised. Besides, the law could never have been duly honoured, if the only way in which it was so, consisted in enduring its penalty. The law is more eminently honoured by obedience to its precepts, than by subjection to its penalty. Well, that in the human nature, the law's honour might be sufficiently supported both by an obedience to its precept, and a submission to its penalty; in the fulness of time God sent forth his own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; and it was indispensably necessary that this dispensation should arise, for otherwise the law would not have had rendered to it

it that respect which was its due. But in this way, by the service and sufferings of the glorious Surety, instead of not having sufficient respect rendered to it, it was magnified, and even made more honourable than ever.

7. These sufferings were necessary, that the greatness of divine love towards the sons of men, might, in the most striking manner, be demonstrated. When we say thus much, we would not be understood as insinuating, that there was an absolute necessity either that Jehovah should let his love upon the sons of men, or that his affection towards them should be so exceeding great, or that he was necessarily limited to this method of demonstrating it. No, in all these, he was most sovereign, acted as seemed good in his sight. At the same time it is to be observed, that when it pleased him to fix his love upon a select number of Adam's ruined family, and when it is considered that his affection towards them was so supereminently great that it cannot be declared how much so it was; in these circumstances, it was absolutely necessary that some method or other should be devised, by which this love might flow out towards, and terminate upon its objects; for love, where genuine and fervent, cannot remain long concealed; it is of an active operative nature; it must exert and exhibit itself in one way or other. Well, though Jehovah was under no absolute necessity of taking this method, independent of and apart from every other, yet, as it would seem, having fixed upon this as a strong and convincing proof that was to be afforded, in regard to the exceeding riches of his love and kindness towards us, there was a necessity in this view for Christ's sufferings, that this important purpose might be accomplished; and doubtless, this important purpose was eminently accomplished by them. While Jesus himself declares, "God so

"loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." The apostles in like manner thus express themselves: "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Without deciding whether there could have been afforded a more illustrious, it may with great propriety be affirmed, that by the service and sufferings of Christ we have afforded a most illustrious demonstration of the exceeding riches of divine love; for it could only be love which has neither height nor depth, length nor breadth, which is altogether inexpressible and incomprehensible; we say, it could only be such love that could express and exert itself in such manner, and at such an expence. That the Judge of all the earth should not only suffer those who had so awfully dishonoured and rebelled against him to live, to exist as monuments of his long-suffering patience and forbearance; but also, that in order to their enjoyment of pardon and peace, their restoration to his favour, and inheriting all blessings with him in heaven, he should, if we may so express ourselves, sacrifice for a season all that was dear and valuable to him, part with his only begotten Son, and forego that mutual complacency which they had in each other; and not only so, but subject him to the tremendous effects of his fierce indignation: All this is so inexpressibly great, that it could originate from and be influenced by nothing other than that love which passeth all comprehension; and the one so exactly corresponds to the other, that there was
certainly

certainly a necessity for the sufferings of the Redeemer, arising from the greatness of divine love towards the sons of men.

18. These sufferings were necessary, that ancient promises and prophecies which were given forth, might receive a due accomplishment; that various types and shadows pointing them out might be substantiated. The Old Testament dispensation was a figure of that which was to come, and in a variety of its ordinances and institutions prefigured Christ as to come, as suffering and dying. There were various promises and prophecies given forth to the faith of Old Testament believers, respecting the death and sufferings of the Redeemer, representing them as the ground of access to, and acceptance with God. Upon the footing of these prophecies and promises they lived, and in the faith of them they died, not having received an actual accomplishment of them, but possessing an assured confidence as to this, and accordingly looking forward towards it. Well, that all these types and shadows might be substantiated, and these prophecies and promises accomplished, as well as the exercise grounded upon them duly honoured and supported, there was an indispensable necessity for Christ's sufferings. In agreeableness to which, both Christ and his apostle express themselves. Says Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" *"Thus it is written, and thus it behoves me to suffer these things."* And in the Evangelists, how often is it mentioned, that this and the other event in regard to Jesus, was, "that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled?" The apostle Paul, when speaking to the Jews at Antioch, Acts,

xlii. 27. declared, "They that dwelt at Jerusalem,
 and their rulers, because they knew him not,
 nor yet the voices of the prophets which are
 read every day, they have fulfilled them in con-
 demning him." And says he. 1 Cor. xv. 3. 4.
 "I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I
 also received, how that Christ died for our sins
 according to the Scriptures; and that he was
 buried; and that he rose again the third day,
 according to the Scriptures." Had not Christ
 served and suffered, those types and shadows which
 pointed out his sufferings, would have become in
 a great measure empty and unmeaning. The pro-
 phecies would have proved false and ill-founded,
 and the promises would in every respect have fail-
 ed. But this could not be: God must remain faith-
 ful to his word and to his work; not one part of
 it shall fail or misgive. He is a rock, and his work
 is perfect. All his words are most firm truth, and
 must be accomplished in their season, whether
 these are prophetic, promissory, or minatory.
 Christ came to bear witness to the truth, and to
 seal it with his blood. In him the promises are all
 yea and amen.

9. These sufferings were necessary, that the evil
 nature and high demerit of sin might in the most
 lively colours be displayed. We would not be un-
 derstood as insinuating, that there was an absolute
 necessity for Christ's sufferings merely to this end.
 To suppose or assert thus much, would be going
 too far. We readily admit, that such an end might
 have in so far been accomplished in another way.
 At the same time, in regard there seems nothing
 more calculated for this than the sufferings of the
 Redeemer, we apprehend, it may hence be con-
 cluded, that one great design in view by those, and
 which rendered them necessary, was, that in and
 by them the evil nature and high demerit of sin
 might

might in the most lively colours be displayed before the sons of men. And what could be more subservient to such an end than such a mean? For while every other mirror in which sin may be viewed discovers its deformity, here we have it in the most striking and obvious manner pointed out to us, as an evil so inexpressibly bitter, abominable, and abhorrent in the sight of God, that he can never be reconciled, but must ever be at variance with it, and pursuing his quarrel against it. If sin is in its nature what is so dishonouring to and abhorred by God, as that when it was found with his only begotten Son, it not only restrained the bowels of his affection towards him, but even as it were for a season swallowed them up, and produced the flaming forth of his wrath and fury against him in the most tremendous manner: we say, if this was the case, as doubtless it was, then sin must be considered as the worst of ills; and we could not have so fully known it to be such, had we not had so striking a demonstration of this truth, that God will by no means clear the guilty.

so. These sufferings were necessary, that Satan's kingdom and interests might be destroyed. Satan by his subtilty, having seduced our first parents from their integrity, asserted his claim to this earth, and more especially to the inhabitants upon it. He has erected a kingdom, and sways his sceptre among the children of disobedience, who are all of them by nature rebels against God, the willing slaves of sin and Satan. While Satan's kingdom prevails, the kingdom of God, all that is spiritual and holy, must be unknown; for these are in diametrical opposition to each other. Accordingly, when Christ came into the world to set up his kingdom among the children of men, it behoved to be upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom and interest; for these two could by no means flourish together;

together; the destruction of the one was necessary to the erection of the other, and in consequence must have been in view. The apostle expresses this in the most decided manner. Says he, "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." It being thus obvious, that one great design which the Redeemer had to accomplish, was the destruction of Satan's kingdom and interest; the grand inquiry arises, how was this to be effected? Though before it happened, or at least was pointed out to us, nothing determinate could have been proposed by us as most proper; yet now that the event is past, we have thence clearly ascertained, that the death and sufferings of Christ were most necessary in this view, this being the appointed mean through which that important end was to be accomplished, and of course the one rendered the other necessary. To carnal unrenewed minds this might, and still may, seem an unaccountable method of procedure; that in order to victory, persons should yield to the violence of their adversaries, and in appearance suffer themselves to be overcome. But the riches of divine wisdom and power here shine conspicuous. For thus the glorious Redeemer took the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward was carried headlong. He, as it were, suffered the wrath of his enemies to consume them, and rendered it subservient to defeat their designs; for by death he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

11. These sufferings were necessary, that relief might be procured to the guilty, and many sons brought to glory. Mankind by their sin not only forfeited all right and title to every blessing, but were also exposed to the wrath and curse of God, due on account of their transgression; and while in this state, their misery was extreme. What served

ved to aggravate their distress was, that they could not possibly help themselves, as having neither an ability nor an inclination to this end. All creature exertions were insufficient for the important purpose, though these had been proposed. There was thus no eye to pity, or hand that could effectually help; and perished the whole human race inevitably must, had not the glorious Surety stood in the gap, and turned away from the sons of men the fierceness of divine anger. And in order to this, he had to become a curse; for the law was inexorable, its curse must be endured; it could not be turned away from pursuing its adversary, till it had spent its fury somewhere. Thus, that relief might be procured to the guilty, that there might be a redeeming from the curse of the law, that the adoption of sons, and the blessing of eternal life, might be the portion of those whom Jesus had given him by the Father, it was indispensably necessary that he should be made under the law, made a curse. It was only in this glorious awful method that many sons could be brought to glory. And hence the necessity of this dispensation is from this ground obvious. Thus the apostle, "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4. 5. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," Heb. 2. 10.

In the *last* place, These sufferings were necessary, that Christ himself might enter into his glory. Jesus, when engaging in the eternal undertaking, had a certain reward proposed and promised him, in consequence

consequence of his finishing that work which was given him to do. This was, "That he should be highly exalted; have a name above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; that he was to see his seed, the travail of his soul; and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand." This no doubt was at all times in his view, what in so far supported under the depths of these sufferings he had measured out to him. It was the joy that was set before him, that animated him to endure the cross, despising the shame. But while all this is to be admitted, it is at the same time to be recollected, that this reward could only be possessed as the consequence of fulfilling that service and suffering which he had engaged to go through. The one was necessary and introductory to the other. The cross was the undoubted way to the crown. That therefore the Redeemer might enter into his glory, might be glorified with that glory which he had before the world was, there was an indispensable necessity for his sufferings. This is expressed in the verse before us, "Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and enter into his glory?" Upon the whole then, from what has been stated, we may survey a glorious necessity for Christ's sufferings; a necessity which fully accounts for, and rendered them altogether indispensable.

It now only remains that we,

III. Make some improvement of this subject.
And,

1. We have hence pointed out to us a chief source of those mistakes and misapprehensions, which too frequently arise with us, and involve in deep distress. It is our unacquaintance with the

Scriptures,

Scriptures, our inattention to our own situation and circumstances, or that of others: It is the Scriptures which alone can make us wise unto salvation; they are as a light shining in a dark place, to which all would do well to take heed; a light to the feet, a lamp to the path. If then we wish to be in the right way, we must be earnest that we have a word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. When, therefore, we are unacquainted with, or unconcerned about the Scriptures, it is not to be wondered though various mistakes and misapprehensions should be gone into by us: It is only in God's light that we can see light clearly. Thus the disciples, owing to their unacquaintance with, and being unmindful of what was expressed by the prophets and in the Psalms concerning Christ, laboured under various mistakes and misapprehensions, and which gave them great uneasiness. Thus also the Psalmist, Ps. lxxiii. when he perceived the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflicted state of the righteous, this was for a season too hard for him, until he went into the sanctuary of God, and there he got his mistakes rectified, his misapprehensions removed. And while the word of God is of special use for our direction, an attention to our own situation and circumstances, or that of others, is peculiarly subservient to regulate our views as to the nature of dispensations; and therefore, when this last is neglected, it is not to be wondered though misconstructions should prevail. This you observe was what the disciples were chargeable with; they did not attend to the situation and circumstances in which their glorious master was placed; they did not consider him as the Christ, and thence they could not be reconciled to what befell him: But this was their infirmity, and thus too often is it in other instances.

O o

2. We

2. We have demonstrated to us how kind and condescending a friend Christ is; he is a friend indeed, as having approved himself to be such in time of need; when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to help, his own arm brought salvation. His kindness is also conspicuous in that care and concern which he exercises in regard to his people: in all their afflictions he is afflicted: he shares their sorrows: The angel of his presence saves them: In his love and in his pity he delivers them from their distresses. Thus the disciples, under their trials, were comforted by him; for when going to Emmaus, and they were sad, he drew near to them, and went with them: and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Besides, Jesus is not only kind to his people by sympathising with, and supporting them under their troubles; he is also eminently kind and condescending, by correcting those mistakes and misapprehensions under which they are too ready to labour. The real Christian may, and too often does err, both in his own conduct, and also in those apprehensions which he entertains in relation to the divine procedure. It is at the same time matter of comfort, that however much he may err, however manifold and aggravated his misapprehensions may be, yet he will not be suffered finally, or even for a long time, to remain in this situation; he will in due time be mercifully recovered out of it. And the kindness, the condescension of Christ in bringing this about, is very obvious: he discovers the utmost tenderness, as well as faithfulness, on such an occasion. Thus in the present instance, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!—*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*" And in like manner to Martha: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

3. We

3. We may learn how hateful sin should be to us; how careful we should be to watch and to war against it. Is sin so great an evil, as that, when it was laid upon the eternal Son, it could not be looked upon with complacency by a holy God, but even then provoked his just wrath and displeasure against it? Could the eternal Son, when made sin, not escape the being stricken and smitten for transgression? Was he under an indispensable necessity to suffer, to have rendered unto him the wages of sin in their full amount? Then surely sin should of all things be abominated by us: we should be careful to watch and war against it. We from hence may reasonably conclude, that sin is both an evil and a bitter thing in itself, and that it is such as can in no instance pass unpunished. Surely such as indulge themselves in evil doing, dishonour God, despise Christ, and love death.

4. We may perceive how foolish and presumptuous it must be for any to propose saving themselves by their own doings. If, in order to the salvation of sinners, there was an indispensable necessity that the eternal Son should become the Christ, and in this character and capacity should finish that work of service and sufferings which was given him to do; then surely it must be folly and presumption in the extreme, for any creature to propose embarking in such an undertaking. While it must appear undoubted, that that suffering to which by sin we are obnoxious, cannot in any instance be dispensed with, but must be endured either by the sinner or the surety; and hence there occurs more than sufficient to deter from the attempt; for creature-capacity can by no means ever survive the fierceness of divine anger till it is wholly spent: while, we say, this is to be taken under consideration, it is at the same time to be recollected, that the service which the law requires from us, is what, in our fallen

estate, we have by no means an ability to render. This was work for which Christ was raised up, and for which he alone is qualified: he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. It can therefore only arise from the enmity of the heart against the law of God and the gospel of Christ, the ignorance that prevails as to the righteousness of God, that any are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, and are not submitting to the righteousness of the Redeemer. Persons cannot pursue a more foolish or a more criminal course.—“By the deeds of the law can no flesh living be justified.”—“Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?”—*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*—

5. We may hence be instructed to whom we are, and must be indebted for every spiritual blessing. This certainly can be none other than our Lord Jesus Christ: He was raised up for this end, that through him abundance of blessings might flow to the sons of men. He has sufficiently acquitted himself in regard to that trust which was reposed in him, that undertaking in which he had engaged; he was ever mindful of, and attentive to what became him as the Christ; he has finished the work which was given him to do, and therefore “God hath highly exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Having fulfilled what was required of him, he is entitled to the reward promised; and therefore it is from and through him that every spiritual blessing is to be derived: He is the way, the truth, and the life: No man can come unto the Father but by him; “neither is there salvation in any other.” “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

“ous.”—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all
 “the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there
 “is none else.”

6. We may hence conclude how reconciled the Christian should be to sufferings; how careful to justify God when under his corrections, and how disposed to glory in tribulation. Was it becoming the character he sustained, was it indispensable to the capacity in which he acted, that Christ should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs? It is no less becoming the character which he sustains, and indispensable to the capacity in which he has to act, that the Christian should be subject to sufferings; for it is through manifold tribulations that he has to enter the kingdom. Was the Redeemer fully reconciled to, and did he cheerfully acquiesce in the whole of what belonged to him as the Christ? And shall not the same mind be in the Christian as was in Christ himself? Is the disciple above his master, or the servant above his lord? Did our Lord Jesus justify his heavenly Father in all the severity of suffering which was measured out, admitting that it was no more, nothing other than what was his due? And shall not the Christian, who never is dealt with as he deserves, or has his ill fully requited upon him, justify his heavenly Father under all those chastisements with which he is visited, however smarting? nay, should he not glory in those tribulations, knowing that they are less than he deserves, that they are medicinal in their nature, and that they shall have a happy issue in due time. Recollecting the character he sustains, and the capacity in which he has to act, he may well exclaim, Ought not the Christian to suffer these things? Having come after Christ, the Christian has engaged to deny himself, to take up his cross, and to follow Christ. That he may fulfil what is incumbent upon him, he must have his cross, and he

deserves to suffer, because he is a sinner. In short, there is in his case a necessity that he should be in heaviness through manifold temptations, that "the trial of his faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." How much then does it become such to say, as their dear Redeemer did when he had a cup infinitely more bitter put into his hands, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?"

7. We have hence opened up to us, how dreadful the situation of impenitent ungodly sinners is and must be. If the eternal Son of God, when made sin, was thereby rendered obnoxious to the divine wrath and vengeance, and was not only obnoxious, but even had the full floods of divine indignation actually poured out upon him; in this case, what a tremendous prospect presents itself to ungodly impenitent sinners, who are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God. If such things were done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death, how much more will he not avenge himself upon incorrigible, impenitent transgressors? Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, we are not thence to conclude that it never shall; nay, the longer it is delayed, the more tremendous in the issue it will be. Though hand join in hand, such shall not go unpunished. Consider this then, and be afraid, ye that forget to seek the Lord, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

In the *last* place, We have hence afforded a proper subject for our present and unceasing contemplation,—the sufferings of Christ. This is a subject the most interesting and inviting to the sons of men

men. It is even what the angels desire to look into. It is so enlarged in its nature and extent, that it cannot ever by finite capacities be fully travelled over. However much inquired into and investigated, yet it still remains an inexhausted and an inexhaustible source of profit and pleasure; and therefore, with propriety, it may be considered as affording a proper subject for our contemplation, not only while in this vale of tears, but also even when we arrive before the Lord in Zion. Hence the sweet employ of the redeemed is pointed out as of this nature; they sing a new song, and with a loud voice say, "Worthy is *the Lamb that was slain*, to receive power, and riches, and honour, "and glory, and blessing."

In conclusion, We would beseech you all to acquaint yourselves with Christ; your absolute need of his interposition; his suitableness and sufficiency as the Saviour. Consider him in the glory of his person, as "Emmanuel, God with us;" in his dignity, "the only begotten of the Father;" in his fitness, "the Word made flesh;" in his majestic loveliness, "full of grace and truth." Contemplate in a particular manner the Redeemer, as serving and suffering; who though rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. Attend carefully to the peculiar nature and indispensable necessity of his sufferings; trace them to the grand source from whence they proceeded; that eternal love with which a Three-one God loved the sons of men; and that glorious issue to which they lead forwards, even that everlasting salvation with which Israel shall be saved. Survey with deep and affecting concern the direful cause which produced them, sin. It was this which brought the Redeemer to the dust of death. For the transgression of his people was he stricken.—
Improve with particular application to yourselves
the

the whole of that service and suffering which was rendered to law and justice. While Messiah was cut off, it was not for himself. He the Just suffered for the unjust, that he might bring such to God; and therefore, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. This being the case, be persuaded, in the exercise of a lively faith, to lay claim to and assert a particular interest in those sufferings, and that everlasting salvation which proceeds from thence. You cannot make a proper account of what Christ has done; but in so far as you are recognising it as done for you, in your name and place, and for your benefit. Let the language of the church be your language: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, he hath carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes are we healed." Say with the apostle, and the believing Galatians, "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." You have the most abundant encouragement afforded to influence this exercise. For while it is the command of God, that ye believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ; while Jesus himself invites you to give him employment, makes you welcome to all that he is and has, and accordingly is thus addressing you, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is none else;" the gracious promise to you is, "They shall come and shall declare his righteousness, and that he hath done this." "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

What

What the precept thus requires, the promise fully secures. The one will never be accomplished by us, but in consequence of the other being fulfilled in us. Matters being thus situated, how encouraged should you be to aim at stretching forth the withered hand at the command of Christ, improving Jesus as made of God to you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption; and while doing so, look to that strength which is in the promise, that fulness of grace which is in the Redeemer, so as to be deriving virtue thence as need requires. And it shall be unto you according to your faith.

In one word, Live daily by faith in Christ. Let his flesh be to you meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. Live to his glory. Be zealous for his honour and interests on the earth. Rejoice if ye are counted worthy to suffer for him; for if ye suffer with and for him, ye shall reign with him, and be glorified together.

SER.

S E R M O N XVII.

LUKE, xvii. 32.

Remember Lot's wife.

THERE is hardly any event which offers to our observation, or with which we are made acquainted, but what, if duly considered, affords some important instruction. However this may be in other instances, it certainly with great propriety may be affirmed of those events which are on record in the word of God. They are without question preserved for our serious consideration, and are specially intended for our instruction and benefit. Hence a particular attention to, and improvement of them is strictly enjoined upon us. A striking proof of which you have in our text. Says our Saviour, *Remember Lot's wife.*

In the 20th verse of this chapter, the Pharisees having put a captious question to Christ, "When the kingdom of God should come?" in answer, Jesus acquainted them, that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation; intimating, that his kingdom was not to be erected with any outward pomp or worldly splendour; that it was not designed to make any great external figure in the world, but was chiefly remarkable for, and distinguished by the spirituality of its nature, power, and designs; the influence, the efficacy that it should

should have upon their hearts and consciences; for, says he, "the kingdom of God is within you." In the 22d verse, he forewarned his disciples, that though for the present they were highly favoured, yet this would not always be their privilege. The time would come when there would be an earnest desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, while it would not be granted them. He also intimated, that at such a time it became them and all Christians, to be cautious and circumspect in their deportment; for when inquiring after a day of the Son of man, they would meet with many who would attempt to deceive, under pretence of gratifying them; but says he, beware of such snares, go not after such deceivers, nor follow them. The reasonableness and solidity of this caution is pointed out in the 24th verse, where he in effect thus addressed them: "It is highly proper that you be upon your guard against such deceivers. Though a day of the Son of man may be looked for at length, though his day is a-coming, which indeed will be a glorious day, when he will set up a glorious kingdom; yet of that day and hour knoweth no man; no one can either foretell when it shall be, or describe its peculiar glory." "For as the lightning that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." In the 25th verse, our Saviour having before intimated that his day is a-coming, he next acquainted his disciples, that it must be preceded by a very dark night. "But first must he," viz. the Son of man, "suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." "You are too apt," as if Jesus had said, "to imagine that I am come to wear an earthly crown, and sway an earthly sceptre, while my great errand is to serve and suffer. I shall indeed have my day, but it is not yet

yet come. The present is mine enemies day
 this is their hour and the power of darkness.
 The Son of man must suffer many things, he
 must be rejected of this generation: but he will
 at length triumph over his enemies, and appear
 in his glory. His day will ere long dawn. His
 coming will exceedingly astonish and alarm.
 This our Saviour insinuated, by resembling his
 coming to two eminent judicial appearances, which
 the Lord had already made for judgement. The
 circumstances in the one case, though much height-
 ened, would have a striking resemblance to what
 took place in the other. For as it was in the
 days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the
 Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they
 married wives, they were given in marriage, un-
 til the day that Noe entered into the ark; and
 the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise
 also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat,
 they drank, they bought, they sold, they plant-
 ed, they builded: But the same day that Lot
 went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone
 from heaven, and destroyed them all: Even thus
 shall it be in the day when the Son of man is
 revealed. As in both the cases referred to, a
 careless, worldly, sensual, secure spirit prevailed,
 iniquity did much abound; so shall it be when the
 Son of man is revealed: For when the Son of man
 cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? And their
 punishment was in some measure corresponding to
 their sin. The improvement which our Saviour
 made of all this, was to admonish all those whose
 lot shall fall in those days, to beware of a worldly
 spirit, an indulging themselves in sin, a giving way
 to, and much more a being wrapped up in sensual
 enjoyment; and in short, the necessity there was,
 and is, in order to safety, of abstaining even from
 the appearance of evil. Accordingly, in the 31st
 verse,

verse, he thus expresses himself, "In that day, he
 "which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff
 "in the house, let him not come down to take it
 "away: and he that is in the field, let him like-
 "wife not return back." To enforce this exhor-
 tation, he makes use of various arguments; the
 first and not the least of which is in the verse now
 before us, *Remember Lot's wife*. The import of
 this argument may be thus expressed: "What I
 "have been representing to you, though in the
 "issue very terrible, may appear to you at some
 "considerable distance, and therefore for the pre-
 "sent need not much alarm you; of course you
 "may consider my admonition as unseasonable, or
 "at the least as premature: But to convince you
 "how mistaken your apprehensions are, I may re-
 "fer you to those in the days of Noah and Lot;
 "nay, there is one particular object which of all
 "others deserves to be attended to and improved,
 "and which, if duly considered, cannot fail to
 "alarm you. Remember Lot's wife; she was pre-
 "cisely of your sentiments; her heart clave to the
 "world; she put the evil day far from her. But
 "observe the greatness of her sin, by the grievous-
 "ness of her punishment. If therefore you would
 "not fall into the like condemnation, fear, and sin
 "not." The words of this verse are short and simple.
 They express a solemn command, uttered by him
 who is Lord of all, enjoining upon the sons of
 men in every succeeding period, a due attention to,
 and improvement of, that important object which
 is pointed out to them, viz. Lot's wife. In dis-
 couraging from this subject, we propose,

I. To consider what in relation to Lot's wife we
 are to remember.

II. To examine wherein a right remembrance of
 all this lies.

P p

III. To

III. To point out some important instruction, which is from hence afforded us.

IV. To state the obligations we are under to be thus exercised.

V. To make some application.

I. We are to consider what in relation to Lot's wife we are to remember. And we apprehend; among other circumstances in relation to her, there are the six following, which in a particular manner deserve to be attended to and remembered, viz. Who she was.—Where she once was.—What occurred to her while there.—Her removal thence.—Her sin.—And her punishment.—We say, we are to remember,

1. Who she was. And in considering who she was, it is by no means sufficient to recollect that she was married to Lot, or daughter to some equally respectable person; it is of more importance to observe, that she was a daughter in Israel; one of the Lord's chosen people; she was one who professed to worship the true God, and to give unto him that glory which is his due; she was connected with a family that was under the peculiar care of Heaven, and which was distinguished by the receipt of manifold mercies. Such being the case, a corresponding conduct and deportment was indispensably incumbent upon, and might be reasonably expected from her. But as we should attend to who she was, so also

2. Where she once was. In order to a just acquaintance with a person, it is often useful the knowing where he dwells, with whom he familiarly associates. A person is as distinguished, and often more so, by his residence, and by his companions, than by what he professes to be; and therefore this is an object of attention in the present instance. One would have thought, that, considering

considering who Lot's wife was, what she professed to be, that we would have found her connected with the saints that were in the earth, and the excellent; at least with none but those who were in some measure of similar characters and dispositions with herself. But alas! this was far from being the case. Accordingly, if we recur to the history to which our text refers, and which you have at large in the book of Genesis, we will find that she was a dweller in Sodom, and that the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. We are told, that in consequence of a difference betwixt Abraham and Lot's herdsmen, there was a proposal made of a separation between Abraham and Lot, who had hitherto lived together. Abraham having given his brother his choice of the country, Lot, without due consideration, and being too much under the influence of a worldly spirit, preferred what was pleasing to the sight, and so journeyed eastward, pitching his tent towards Sodom. It is ever dangerous to enter into temptation; and Lot felt this in his sad experience. It would seem he did not long continue in the plain, so as only to point towards Sodom; he at last, if not very quickly, entered into it, and in so far incorporated himself with the men of Sodom. There is, however, this difference betwixt Lot himself and his family. As to Lot himself, however much appearances were to the contrary, yet he was notwithstanding a righteous person, one who feared the Lord; and therefore, though amongst the Sodomites, was much distressed and grieved with those evils and abominations with which they were chargeable. Whereas, in regard to the rest of the family, his wife in particular, it would seem that evil communications had corrupted her, and that she either in so far approved of, or at least was not so affected as she should

have been, with the evils which did there prevail.
— But we are to recollect,

3. What occurred to Lot's wife while in Sodom. When Lot and his wife had taken up their residence in Sodom, and incorporated themselves amongst its wicked inhabitants, it, in consequence, might have been expected, that as they had thus in so far thrown themselves out of the divine protection, that the Lord would in return have cast them off, have given them up to the lusts of their own hearts, to wander in counsels of their own devisings; and that, as they had followed a multitude that were doing evil, they would along with them have perished. But though Jehovah be that God who will by no means clear the guilty, yet he is at the same time mindful of his covenant; he keepeth truth for ever, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Though his people may depart from, and cast him off, yet he will not altogether cast off his people, or quit his inheritance. He will gather his chosen from all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day; accordingly, though Lot was in Sodom, yet even there the Lord visited him and his family, and would first deliver Lot out of it, before he would arise to judgement against that wicked place; and such was the Lord's kindness to Lot, that he not only would give him his own life, but the lives of all who would claim any connection with him, to the end of saving themselves from the impending destruction; and hence, with this design, the Lord sent two angels to forewarn of the desolation determined, to give him and his family assurance of safety, direct him and his family to their proper duty, and even assist in discharging it. In all which there was doubtless a rich display of mercy. — But this will be farther illustrated, when we observe,

4. Her

4. Her removal out of Sodom. Lot in so far gave credit to the awful threatening in regard to Sodom, and to that gracious message in relation to himself and his connections, which was delivered by the angels; and so in obedience to orders, went out and proclaimed the tidings of judgement and of mercy, as he had opportunity, to all, but more especially to his daughters and sons-in-law. But in this employ he was altogether unsuccessful. We are told, that even to his sons-in-law he seemed as one that mocked. It would at the same time appear, that neither Lot nor his wife was so forward to leave Sodom as they should have been. Whether he wished still to prevail with his sons-in-law, whether his wife, and the two daughters which were in his house, were equally reluctant to leave Sodom as his other connections, and so were a snare to him; or whether he was equally criminal in loitering as they were, is not so clear. One thing however is undoubted, and that is, that the Lord, to that display of the kindness he had already made, added this illustrious one, the enforcing obedience to his call by the exertion of his great power: For we are told, "that as Lot lingered, the angels laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, led them forth, and brought them without the city," all which was done because the Lord was merciful to them.

But what of all other circumstances claims our attention is,

5. The great sin with which Lot's wife was chargeable. One would have imagined, considering that rich display of divine kindness which they had already experienced, and to the full enjoyment of which they were invited, that this would have influenced their glorifying God, by a ready obedience to his command, and also excited

in them a due regard to their own safety. But from what occurred in this instance, we may learn the absolute necessity of the grace of God, and the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, both in order to the production of a saving change in any, and also its maintenance; for unless this is vouchsafed, neither grievous sinning will suitably affect, nor will awful threatenings alarm, nor will great kindness allure; but, thoughtless and inconsiderate, we will remain unimpressed and uninfluenced by all that is taking place. When the angels led Lot and his family forth of the city, they intimated, that though they were now in the way to safety, yet that their safety was not completely secured; and accordingly they were charged to use the utmost expedition in consulting their safety, lest they should be overtaken with, and overwhelmed in, the impending destruction. Said the angels to each of them, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." And again, after Lot had preferred an humble petition, which was granted, the order was repeated: "Haste thee, escape thither." Thus intimating, that though safety was ascertained in the issue, yet it could only be enjoyed in the event of a due observance of the appointed means; and that the neglect or contempt of the one might justly deprive of the other. Such being the situation of matters, it might have been expected that duty, interest, and every other tie, would have concurred to influence a becoming attention to every iota of what was enjoined. But alas! this was far from being the case with Lot's wife. She disobeyed. We are told, "that she looked back from behind him," viz. Lot. Her sin is expressed in a few words; but we are not to conceive that it was the less on this account. If the matter

is faithfully attended to, it will be found to be a crime of the most heinous nature; that it contained various ingredients which rendered it a very evil and bitter thing in the sight of God.

It is in general pointed out to be only a looking back; but this in its nature and import comprehended much under it: For this was positive disobedience, in regard it was against the express command of God given forth by the angels, Gen. xix. 17. The command being expressed in the singular number, instead of being less, was rather more strongly binding upon all, as being thus addressed to every individual. It was a sin without a temptation. The greatness of a temptation, though it can by no means excuse, yet in some cases may diminish our guilt. Sin is not so great when it is gone into by surprise, or through infirmities, as when it is done deliberately, and from love to it. Now such it would seem was the case with Lot's wife. We hear or read of no temptation without her. It was from her own lust that she was drawn aside and enticed. It was clearly unbelief; and this very probably operating in two ways: Discrediting the divine threatening in relation to the city, reckoning that no such thing would take place; and with this view looking back to see if there were any appearance of its approach, and expecting to find none. It might also be a discrediting the divine promise as to their safety; and hence, though the Lord had engaged to do nothing till they were safe in Zoar, yet, as if this was not a sufficient security, and, as rather apprehensive of danger, she looked back to observe if the judgement had commenced, and was about to overtake them. In which ever of these lights the matter is to be viewed, her conduct was certainly most criminal, and more so, if, as is most probably, there was a mixture of both prevailing.

Besides,

Besides, what aggravated the matter was, that it would seem the whole proceeded from a carnal, worldly spirit; from an attachment, an affection, to earthly sensual objects. Her looking back said, that she in so far had left her heart behind her. Though she had gone out of Sodom, yet she was by no means alienated from it. Her affections were in some measure, if not in a strong degree, still towards it; and therefore she seemed as disposed to return back as to go forwards. This construction of her conduct we are warranted to make from what Christ said in the preceding verses, and the reference he instantly had to her case.

There was, moreover, much unthankfulness visible in her conduct. The Lord had in so far wrought a wonderful deliverance for her; he had such a favour for Lot, that though he was about to turn Sodom into ashes, he would not kindle the fire of his indignation till he and his family were in a place of safety. To be thus distinguished, was without question great kindness. Therefore, to sin under the receipt of so signal a mercy, was certainly a very grievous offence, what could not fail to provoke the divine displeasure in an eminent degree. But this was not all; for it was not only a sin in the face of a signal deliverance, but even while the deliverance was accomplishing, and not yet accomplished. Though the Lord had brought her out of Sodom, yet she was not yet in Zear, the place of safety: she was escaping from danger, but had not yet escaped. And this in a particular manner aggravated her crime; for to sin while we are in the hand of mercy, and under its actual workings for our benefit, is, with a peculiar emphasis, to sin. Still farther, there was not only a despising divine mercy, but even a setting divine justice at defiance, her conduct being an evident contempt of it. While divine justice was about to

flame.

flame forth in the execution of deserved vengeance upon the city, while the order was peremptory, "look not back," and which was sanctioned by an awful threatening, "lest thou be consumed;" yet, as regardless of the whole, she looked back; and hence was more criminal than even those whose heart is set in them to do evil, because judgement is not speedily executed. In one word, it was apostacy from God. There was a great degree of backsliding in her conduct; for though she did not turn back, she looked back; and thus it appeared that her heart was turned back. It would seem she in some measure repented of leaving Sodom. This was a bitter ingredient in her offence. To turn from sin at the call of God is good; but to repent of our turning, to turn back either with our looks or in our heart, this is an undoing all again, and making matters worse than ever. Says Solomon, "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Putting then all these circumstances together, it must be obvious that her sin, however small in appearance, was in fact very heinous. But as sin and suffering, guilt and misery, are ever inseparable, so we have not only to remember her great sin, but also,

In the *last* place, that grievous punishment which followed upon it. And this, that we may discern the evil nature and high demerit of sin; for we may understand the greatness of her sin, by the grievousness of her punishment, *She was turned into a pillar of salt*. It would be idle as well as unprofitable, if not also presumptuous, to attempt the resolving every inquiry which has been or may be made in relation to this punishment. The grievousness of the punishment is what should in a particular manner affect us. There were several circumstances attending it, which point out the severity of the dispensation. It was sudden, and rendered

dened without any previous warning of its approach. The sin was no sooner committed, than the judgement due to it was rendered. *She looked back, and instantly she became a pillar of salt.* It is a great mercy when the Lord gives warning of a judgement before it comes; but he sometimes cuts his work short in righteousness, is quick and speedy in his procedure, and then matters become truly awful and alarming. It was inflicted while she was engaged in sinning, and this points out the judgement to be very great. What can be more alarming than when the Lord cuts off a person in the very act of sinning; for in this case there is no time or space given to repent. Though it is the greatest mercy to have a heart to repent, the spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon us to this end, yet it is a great mercy even to have time and space given in which to repent. Lot's wife, it would seem, had not this vouchsafed her. It is to be feared she died in her sins.

It was a strange and unusual punishment. When the Lord goes out of the ordinary way of his judgements, and adopts an extraordinary method in smiting the sinner, this argues that he is sorely displeased, that his wrath is hot against him. Job speaks of a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity, that is, such as is singular, out of the common road, and what is but rarely inflicted. Such was the punishment of Aaron's sons: They offered strange fire to the Lord, and strange fire from the Lord consumed them. Such also, and still more so, was the present instance. Whoever heard of any one either before or since, that has been as Lot's wife was, turned into a pillar of salt. It was inflicted by the immediate hand of God. Those judgements which are produced by the medium of instruments, are not so great as those which proceed immediately from the Lord's own hand.

hand. It is with judgements, as it is with mercies. Those mercies we receive, the more immediately they come from the Lord's own hand, they are ever the greater and the sweeter. The mercies we receive in heaven they are the greatest of all, and they are all in an immediate way: There are no mediums used for their conveyance. So it is with judgements; they are ever the greatest and most dreadful that come most directly from the Lord's own hand. What is the fire of hell, but the immediate wrath of God upon the wicked in their whole persons there? Now Lot's wife was under an immediate judgement: She was struck by the Lord's own hand, without the intervention of any medium. In her case there was no fire used, as was in the case of Sodom; and therefore the judgement of God upon her was very great. The striking resemblance which it had to the punishment of Sodom renders it still more awful. The whole of Sodom was turned into salt, and she was turned into a pillar of salt: She partook with Sodom in its sin; her heart was still in so far towards it; her affections were in a great measure there; and in consequence, it was just that she should become a partaker of its plagues.

Besides, the punishment was the more remarkable, from its being of an exemplary nature. The Lord sometimes, as it were, hangs up one in chains, to be a warning to sinners, that all may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that others profiting by her example, may, after having given up themselves to Christ, be deterred from looking back, and much more turning back, to any worldly interest or gratification which is in opposition to his will and their duty. In short, the durable nature of the punishment points out to us that it was very great. Salt is a durable thing; it prevents corruption

corruption and putrefaction: A pillar of salt of course must be durable. Her becoming such seems to say, that the Lord would not only plead in controversy with her for the present, but would continue to do it. She became a pillar of salt, not of stone, marble, or the like, that she might be an enduring monument, and might impress those in after ages with the fear of backsliding. It is reported that the pillar was remaining for two thousand years after it was first erected, and some apprehend that it still continues: But whether this be the fact or not, our Lord Jesus Christ has in our text, by virtue of his authority, set it up as a spiritual pillar which will never fail; and he has done this, that we may avoid falling into the same condemnation: Says he, *Remember Lot's wife*. If you look back, turn back, you must abide by the consequences; but go forwards, hold on in the right way, in the path of duty, and the event will be corresponding. — But this leads us, as was proposed,

II. To examine wherein a right and suitable remembrance of Lot's wife lies. And here it is observable, that the injunction is not, propagate far and wide this instance of my displeasure, this monument of sin and shame. To proclaim our brother or sister's sin, shame, or sufferings, farther than as strict duty requires, is at once a most disgraceful and undesirable employment. It also in its nature is dishonouring to God; injurious to our brother, and highly unbecoming our character and duty as Christians. Love, where genuine, and when it has a proper influence upon persons, will dispose to throw a veil as far as possible upon the faults and failings of others. But though we are thus to cover them, yet we are at the same time carefully to observe and improve every occurrence

that

that falls under our notice; and this more especially, when the Lord by his judicial procedure has affixed a baniment upon evil-doing, as in the present case. If then it should be inquired, wherein does a right improvement of this dispensation lie? What is it in a suitable manner to remember Lot's wife? We answer, that in our view this among other things includes,

1. The rendering a due regard to the divine command in this instance. While no exercise is warrantable or proper but what is by the interposition of the glorious lawgiver constituted such; accordingly, when attending upon any duty in a becoming manner, we must ever be satisfied that we have a Thus saith the Lord binding it upon us. This must in an especial manner be in our view, and influencing our conduct: And you will observe, that it is by no means sufficient that this is at first recognised; a continued regard must be exercised in relation to it, as what gives importance to, and renders indispensable that in which we are engaged. Besides, the law of God, as being exceeding broad, not only constitutes the matter of duty, but also is subservient to regulate an acceptable discharge of what is incumbent upon us, and therefore in both of these considerations is to be respected; for it can only be when this is the case, that in any instance we are acting a proper part. This was the Psalmist's great desire. Said he, "Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed when I have a respect to all thy commandments." Well, thus is it we are to remember Lot's wife. When doing so, we are not to be influenced merely from the consideration of its being a remarkable providential occurrence, what presents us with a variety of unusual circumstances, or which may afford us many important lessons. These considerations, though they have their weight, yet they by no means lay

the foundation of this duty. It is binding upon us in consequence of the divine command being interposed to this end; and therefore, in attending upon it, if we would do so in an acceptable manner, we must render, in the first place, a due regard to the divine will thus expressed; we must consider this as giving importance to, as rendering it indispensably incumbent upon us; and not only so, but in the whole of that attention which is observed in relation to this object, we must ever continue our regard to the divine command, and be influenced by that direction which is afforded us for regulating our conduct. It is not to please men that we are to be thus exercised, or is it chiefly for our own profit; our great end and object should be, to please and glorify God, by studying a conformity to his will, and therefore this should be explicitly expressed.—This includes,

2. The exercise of fervent prayer for the spirit and grace of Christ as indispensably necessary to a suitable improvement of this dispensation. Meditation and prayer are fitly joined together. They are reciprocally subservient to each other. As meditation is a special help to prayer, affording many hints, which may in so far produce and promote this exercise, so is prayer to meditation: For the objects we are contemplating, often cannot in their nature and importance be either distinctly discerned by us, or suitably improved, without the special aid of the Spirit and grace of Christ. It too often, nay it always happens, that we cannot understand without we are taught; and even when taught, we cannot either will or do any thing in an acceptable manner, unless the Lord commands our strength, works in us to this end. But for all this, he must be inquired of by the house of Israel, that he may do it for them. Thus prayer and meditation are in every instance inseparably connected. In the present case they are unquestionably so; for there cannot

cannot be a remembering, a contemplating this subject in a suitable manner, but in the frequent and fervent exercise of prayer. There is such a variety of circumstances connected with and belonging to it; there is so much of judgement and mercy displayed on this occasion, both of which are great depths; in short, there are so many important lessons which may be derived hence, that, without taking in other considerations, it is obvious there is an indispensable necessity for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, his enlightening our minds, that we may see light in this light clearly; and it is no less requisite that the grace of the Redeemer be abundantly vouchsafed, for otherwise we will not, we cannot be making a suitable account or improvement of what is before us. And that we may obtain all this, it is incumbent upon us that we be frequent and fervent in our supplications at the throne of grace. When and while we are remembering Lot's wife, that we may do it acceptably and profitably, we should be exercised as was the Psalmist. We should say, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold thy wonders, and the judgements of thy mouth." "Hold up my goings, that my footsteps may not slide." "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

3. To remember Lot's wife, is to acquaint ourselves particularly with, and seriously consider the several circumstances in relation to her which are proposed to us in Scripture. In attending to this duty, it is by no means enough that we recall to our mind, in a general way, that there was such a person as Lot's wife, that she looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt. This may be done without the smallest glory redounding to God, or profit to the person. If we would be suitably exercised as required, it is incumbent upon us that we acquaint ourselves particularly with the object

proposed; for till once the several circumstances in relation to it are investigated and understood, its nature and importance cannot be sufficiently ascertained. Lot's wife is presented as a subject which ought to be studied by us; and we never render an acceptable obedience to this precept, but in so far as we are growing in a knowledge of those things which relate to her. When attending to this or any other subject, we are not indeed to pry into the deep things of God; but in regard to what is revealed, we should not only aspire after knowing, but should follow on to know; and after all that is acquired in any instance, still there remains, and will remain, sufficient scope for farther inquiry: Here we know but in part, and see but in part. But not only are we to acquaint ourselves particularly with every circumstance in relation to Lot's wife, we are also at the same time to lay up the knowledge we acquire in our minds, and frequently to review it. Our knowledge will not profit us, unless it is thus improved: and you will observe, that in reviewing this important transaction, it must not be in a careless, indifferent, or hasty manner; we are not to consider matters slightly or superficially, but with the utmost seriousness and solemnity; we are to render such attention to them as their awful importance demands and deserves; and we are to be thus exercised as often as opportunity is given us to this end. Thus the Psalmist, "I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search; I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings."

4. It is to be deeply affected with her great sin, and that grievous punishment which followed upon it. Though an acquainting ourselves with, and considering seriously the several circumstances in relation to Lot's wife be proper, yet it is not the whole of what is incumbent. If matters are carried

ried to a proper length, if the Lord the Spirit is with us in the exercise, what thus falls under our consideration cannot fail deeply to affect us. Sin, either in ourselves or others, should never be viewed with indifference. Whenever it presents itself to our observation, it should ever be an affecting object of concern, as being so dishonouring to God, so debasing and destructive to mankind; and the greater, the more heinous the sin in its nature is, the more of this should prevail. Thus the Psalmist, "I beheld the transgressors, and was "grieved because they kept not thy word." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they "keep not thy law." And you will observe, that where there is a being suitably affected with sin, there will be a concern as to it, in all the extent of that evil which belongs to it, so far as apprehended by the person. And this concern, as it has an extensive object, so it is of an enlarged nature. It includes under it not only a being grieved for, but also a loathing, an abhorring, an hating sin, a turning from it unto God, from an apprehension of that mercy which reigns through righteousness, with full purpose of heart and endeavour after new obedience. Thus is it that we are to remember Lot's wife. But as when doing so, we are to be deeply affected with her great sin, so also with that grievous punishment which followed upon it. To be unaffected with distress of any kind, when it comes under our notice, argues an inconsiderate, an unfeeling mind; much more must this be the case when sufferings are extreme, and are produced as the wages of sin, the evidences of the divine indignation. In these circumstances, certainly an awful feeling concern should prevail, and this proportioned to the severity of the stroke. Besides, when the Lord's judgements are inflicted, this is a special season when persons should learn righteousness. Thus the prophet Jeremiah, chap. ix. 1.

“ Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” And again, in his book of Lamentations, chap. ii. vi. “ Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.” If therefore we would be suitably exercised in the present instance, we must, with the Psalmist, tremble for fear of God, and be afraid of his judgements.

5. It is to be impressed with a lively gratitude to the Lord for his kindness towards us, in proportion as this has been displayed. This, in our view, is a special ingredient in this exercise; for there cannot be a contemplating Lot's wife in a suitable manner, unless we turn from her to ourselves, and review in connection the several circumstances which occur in both cases; and we cannot do this without having afforded to us innumerable grounds for praise and thanksgiving; and we cannot make a right improvement of either, but in so far as we are impressed with a lively gratitude to the Lord for his kindness. When we recollect that the same seeds of evil-doing are in us as were in Lot's wife, and unless restrained by divine power, would produce the same fruit, if not worse than proceeded from her; if we advert to this, that it is not owing to ourselves, but to the divine interposition in our behalf, that we have a name and a place in God's house, are members of his church, have an opportunity of attending upon his ordinances, and are not incorporated among the wicked, those that are sinners exceedingly before God; when we consider that ill's past reckoning are to be found with us, that iniquities testify against us to the very face, and that these are both heinous in their nature, and attended with peculiar aggravations; when

when we advert to the high demerit of sin, and what in consequence of our multiplied and atrocious offences we deserve, and at the same time feel that we are continued monuments of the divine long-suffering patience towards us, if not also of his pardoning, regenerating, and sanctifying mercy: when, we say, we have these in our view, the different tenor of divine dispensation towards her and us, with what a lively gratitude should we be impressed to the God of our mercies? While we should revere his severity in his dealings towards her as being justly due, we should acknowledge and adore the exceeding riches of his grace to us, according to that proportion in which it has been vouchsafed. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his works of wonder done unto the sons of men!"

In the *last* place, To remember Lot's wife, is to search out, listen to, and profit by those important lessons which from hence are afforded us. The divine dispensations towards Lot's wife were not gone into solely on her account. They were intended to be useful to others, and are hence full of instruction to those who have a discerning spirit, and are exercising it in a becoming manner. She was set up as a beacon, that all in succeeding ages might see, hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly. If then her conduct, and the tenor of divine dispensation towards her, contain many important lessons to us, certainly a proper account and improvement cannot be made of it, but in so far as there is an attending to, a searching out these, and this not in a careless indifferent manner, but with earnestness and anxiety. And not only is there to be a searching out, but also a listening to that instruction which is afforded us. It will be to little purpose that we have instruction afforded us, if we do not render a proper attention to it; and you will observe, that a suitable listening to instruction

instruction lies in receiving it; receiving it not only into the understanding, but also embracing it with the will, the affections; in short, making it entirely our own. But this is not all, for where matters are carried to a proper length, as there will be a making that instruction which we have afforded as our own, so there will be an improving it, a turning it to our advantage, as opportunity offers; and this with a diligence, a carefulness, corresponding to the important nature of that which is thus influencing us. And it is to be adverted to, that if we are not attentive to this, we must be verily guilty: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is *sin*." Thus therefore we are to remember Lot's wife. When and while doing so, we are to search out, listen to, and profit by those important lessons which are hence afforded us. For your assistance in this employment, we have proposed to point out some of those lessons. This shall be attended to in the following discourse.

Mean time suffer the word of exhortation. — Render a due regard to the divine commandment in this and every other instance. — Be much in prayer for the Spirit and grace of Christ, without which ye can do nothing. — Remember Lot's wife. Remember how thou thyself hast fallen. Repent, and do the first works. — Escape for thy life. — Turn to your strong holds, while prisoners of hope. — Beware of hankering or hesitation. Zoar is before you. Jesus, that man who is an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, waits that he may be gracious. Take up your refuge and residence under the shadow of his wings, and then you shall be in perfect safety. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

S E R M O N XVIII

LUKE, xvii. 32.

Remember Lot's wife.

HAVING considered what in relation to Lot's wife we are to remember, and examined wherein a suitable improvement of this dispensation lies, we now go on, as was proposed,

III. To point out some of those important lessons which we have hence afforded us. Amongst the many lessons which this dispensation furnishes to us, we apprehend the following are not the least important, and are clearly to be deduced from what is before us.—We have hence pointed out to us,

1. The evil nature and high demerit of sin. There is nothing which we have more need to be frequently instructed in, and to have deeply impressed upon us than this. Though sufficiently acquainted with sin in practice, yet we are sadly ignorant of, and inattentive to, its desling nature and high demerit. What is still more affecting, we wish to remain so: We do much to persuade ourselves that sin is neither so bitter nor so dangerous as is sometimes represented. Hence it is we are too ready to roll this and the other evil underneath our tongue, as a sweet morsel, after that we have

have gratified our corrupt appetites, with the adulterous woman, wipe our mouths, and say we have done no iniquity. Even while by our evil conduct we are subjecting ourselves to the wrath and indignation of the Almighty, how ready are we to say, this evil shall not overtake or prevent us; nay, no evil whatever shall befall us. But however much we may entertain such apprehensions for a time, we will not always do so. If sovereign mercy, in this our day, do not interpose to deliver us from such delusions, our misapprehensions will be awfully rectified in a future state, when it will be entirely out of our power to profit by the discovery. If therefore we would be wise, it must be while it is said to-day, before the darkness altogether overtake us, and we are cast into that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Sin, whether we think so or not, is an evil and a bitter thing. It is that abominable thing which God hates; that which sets God at variance with us, and provokes his just displeasure. It is a transgression of that law which is holy, just, and good; is direct enmity and rebellion against God himself; nay, an insult offered to the whole of his perfections. It darkens the understanding, perverts the will, vitiates the affections, defiles the conscience, and in short brings ruin upon the whole man: It is the offspring of Satan, the enemy of God and man, and the fruitful parent of every woe: It is an infinite evil objectively considered, as striking against the Majesty of heaven and earth; of course its demerit is so high that it cannot be defined. The apostle in general informs us, that "the wages of sin is death;" "that for which things sake, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." But what the wrath of God, in the full extent of the expression, is, cannot,

cannot, by finite minds, be either conceived or declared. It must be considered as most tremendous and terrible: Who knoweth its utmost extent, the power of divine anger? Sin is thus both evil in its nature, and of exceeding high demerit. This is a lesson which is clearly afforded us from this subject. Have we not, in the case before us, pointed out, in the most explicit manner, the whole of what has just now been stated in regard to sin? The Lord, in Lot's wife, has, as it were, set up a mirror before our eyes, in which there is evidently to be discerned how debasing and destructive sin is; and we never to purpose look towards it, but in so far as we are making this discovery.—

We have pointed out to us,

2. That what by us may be reckoned no offences, or at utmost but small sins, are in their nature great transgressions, and will, without peradventure, subject us to grievous punishments. There can be no error more fatal, and yet there is none to which we are more liable than this, the entertaining slight notions of our conduct; the persuading ourselves, that though some parts of it are not quite so proper, so commendable as they should be, yet that they are so little otherwise, that there is not the smallest reason for being distressed on this account; and we would even delude ourselves, that this is the case not only in our own apprehension but what is of still more importance, that it is so in the sight of God: and hence, when urged on to this and the other part of conduct, though at first some objections may seem to offer against what is proposed, yet we are led on to it, either by flattering ourselves that those objections which occur are either trifling in themselves, or are altogether inapplicable, at least very little so; and accordingly, what is proposed is considered to be quite innocent and harmless, or at least so little otherwise, that

that there need be no hesitation in going forwards. Satan, our great adversary, with his agents in the soul, are at the bottom of, and very active in producing all this; for while his hellish purpose is as far as possible to make us like himself, rebels against God, his every exertion is directed to this end. Accordingly, when other methods do not sufficiently answer, when sin in its own native likeness is not so readily complied with, he attempts, and often too successfully, to prevail with persons in the commission of iniquity, by varnishing it over with some illusive pretext or other; representing it to their imagination, if not also to their reason, as no sin, or at least if it can at all be termed evil, that it is so inconsiderable in this view that it need by no means be started at; more especially when there are so many weighty reasons on the other side to induce a compliance. If his end is accomplished, be it under one pretext or another that his suggestion is complied with, he is satisfied. But we should not be ignorant of his devices. Be assured, that however strongly Satan may persuade us to the contrary, however much we may delude ourselves with such apprehensions, yet nothing is more undoubted than this, that every part of our conduct must in its nature be either sin or duty, and that no sin can or should be considered as small; and therefore we should be careful to ascertain and avoid what is evil, attentive to ascertain and follow after that which is duty.

There is the utmost danger in being careless and negligent in either of these cases. While we are exceeding liable to reckon that to be no sin which is really such in its nature, it may happen, that under the influence of Satan, and the lusts of our own heart, we in this manner may be led on from evil to worse. The best way to satisfy ourselves whether any part of our conduct is criminal or
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not, is to bring it to the only touchstone, the law of God; and if it is not explicitly or implicitly allowed or required by it, the matter is clear, it must be sin. Even when there may be some difficulty to have its nature certainly defined, yet if it has the smallest lean or tendency to what is improper, our line of conduct is decided. If we would act a proper part, we must abstain even from the appearance of evil; and if we should abstain from what only has the appearance, much more must we guard against that which is confessedly such; and we may add, that instead of being an apology for our conduct, it will exceedingly aggravate it, if, in excuse for what has been done, or is doing, we presume to think or represent that it is a little evil, a small sin. If we have right apprehensions as to the nature of sin, we will never venture to consider any instance of evil-doing as a small matter. There is indeed no propriety in, or foundation for the distinction betwixt great and small sins. Though some parts of conduct, on account of their complex nature, are more heinous in the sight of God than others; the law of God is as clearly transgressed, the authority and majesty of the lawgiver is as much struck at, and the penalty is as certainly incurred by one sin as another, when the matter is abstractly considered; and therefore it is obvious, that as to any sin, it can never with propriety come under our consideration as a small or a light matter, or shall any sin go unpunished; for the wages of sin, of every sin, is death.

From the instance before us we are taught, that what appears, and may be reckoned by us to be no sin, is in its nature a very great transgression. According to our apprehension, what could have been more harmless, more inoffensive, than a glance of the eye, a transient look towards Sodom; more

especially when it is considered, that an affection to those she had left behind might almost involuntarily produce this? But however slight the offence at first sight may appear, if attentively reviewed, it will be found in its nature to be an evil, and a great evil; and if we consider the alarming issue to which matters were brought, we will soon perceive its awful demerit. Thus also in the case of Uzziah. He did but touch the ark, and was immediately punished with death. His conduct in this instance, so far from having the appearance of sin, rather looked as an act of duty and kindness, in regard to the oxen shooing the ark: but the Lord seeth not as man seeth; he judgeth the heart. If therefore we would be wise, we must exercise a holy jealousy in regard to our conduct, we must fear, and sin not. We have pointed out to us,

3. That secret sins, as well as open transgressions, are under the observation and cognisance of Jehovah, and that both these draw down the divine indignation upon the sinner. There is nothing which more claims our attention than this; and the rather, as it is but too common for persons to entertain the apprehension, that what is done by them can be no crime, if it can only be got concealed from the sight of fellow-creatures. Accordingly, with many, secret transgressions in their view are no sins, what need not disturb or distress them. But alas! in thus thinking or speaking, how much are persons misled? Our conduct in its relation to fellow-men is of little consequence in comparison with what it is in its relation to Jehovah our lawgiver and judge. In its relation to fellow-men, our conduct can never in any instance be a sin; the highest it can ever reach is that of an offence, an injury done persons, and this either great or small, according to its nature and tendency. But in its relation to Jehovah the lawgiver, the matter

matter becomes very different: Our conduct in every instance must either be an obedience to the law of God, or it must be a transgression; and if a transgression of the law, then it is sin, and it can only be such in this light; for sin is a transgression of the law of God. Well, taking up the matter in this view, strictly speaking, there is no propriety in the distinction betwixt secret and open sins; for in regard to God, nothing whatever can be hid from him; every thing is naked and open. At the same time, viewing matters as they are in our apprehensions and manner of expression, there is some propriety in the distinction. We are apt to consider those things which are done when no other is present, or if present, when what is done, is incapable of being observed in its true nature; we say, we are apt to consider these as secret, because known only to ourselves; and we would sometimes persuade ourselves that they are so entirely within ourselves, as even to be unknown and unobserved by God himself. Hence the language of the heart, if not of the lips, is, "The Lord seeth not; he will not regard." But however much this may prevail, it is a vain, a foolish imagination. It is impossible to conceal ourselves, or our conduct, from the all-penetrating eye of Jehovah. He searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men: He knoweth our thoughts, and descends into the inmost recesses of the soul. He is intimately acquainted with every part of our conduct; our up-risings and down-sittings, our out-goings and in-comings; nay, our thoughts afar off are all well known by him. "Mine eyes," saith he, "are upon their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And this being the case, it must be foolish to imagine

that any sin can be secret and concealed from him. Even that which is planned with the utmost caution, and conducted with the utmost reserve towards fellow-creatures, so as to render their inquiries in relation to it unavailing, is as obvious to the Lord as when we sin in the most open manner whatever. This is quite clear, from the instance before us. Lot's wife did not sin openly, it was in a secret concealed manner she acted; for it is stated, that though she looked back, yet it would seem she was careful that her husband, and, it is probable, none else, should observe what was doing; and accordingly she is represented as looking back from behind him. But it is to be adverted to, that though she concealed her conduct for the present from the view of fellow-creatures, yet it did not escape the omniscient eye of Jehovah. This, in all its aggravating circumstances, was immediately under his observation and cognisance, and accordingly drew down his indignation upon her. In like manner, Achan secretly stole the wedge of gold, and with special caution hid it; but his conduct was not so secret as to be concealed from the Lord, who accordingly brought to light this hidden work of darkness. Ananias and Sapphira also would have deceived and imposed upon the apostles: but the Lord found them out; he was entirely acquainted with all their procedure, and their secret sins brought ruin upon them.

The base assassin may murder, and this in so secret a manner as to prevent the keenest search of fellow-men having influence to detect his wickedness. But the Lord seeth him, and in his time will make inquisition for blood. While blood calleth aloud for vengeance, he will not fail to repay it; nay, rather than this should not be, he will make the person's own conscience a mean in his hand for bringing forwards the execution of deserved judgment.

ment. The unclean person usually has recourse to the most secret place for the perpetration of his iniquity; but the Lord seeth both where he is, and what he does. As a proof of this, pray observe, (for it is very observable), what is said, Heb. xii. 4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Whence is it that such particular mention is made of God's judging these? The reason we apprehend is clearly this, because these sins are for the most part carried on in so concealed and hid a manner, that they elude creature observation. They are however in every instance under his eye, and are so detested by him, as that he will not fail to evidence, in a striking manner, his displeasure on this ground. In short, let us trace iniquity through every particular species, yet however secretly transacted, it is ever obvious and open to the all-seeing Jehovah, and will not fail to draw down his indignation upon them that thus trouble him. This being the case, how much reason have all to be alarmed, when in this respect innumerable evils encompass them about? What a check, a restraint, should this be to keep us from sin, and this as much when no one sees us, as when we are open to the observation of many? We cannot be concealed from his eye, which runs to and fro throughout the whole earth: Whither shall we flee from his presence? If we should say the darkness shall cover us, even the night shall be light about us. The darkness hideth not from him, the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the night are both alike to him. — We have pointed out to us, 1st. 4. That the Lord is a God of inflexible justice, of unquestionable faithfulness; and of course, that sin cannot in any instance pass unpunished. There is nothing of greater importance for us to know

and remember than this, that the Lord is "the Father who judgeth," and who, when acting in his character and capacity, "without respect of persons judgeth every man's work." He is the Judge of all the earth, who cannot but do the thing that is right; he judgeth righteous judgement. In the administration of justice, he is without variableness or shadow of turning: And he is the God who keepeth truth for ever, whose word cannot fail; who is equally faithful to his promises and to his threatenings, and will have them all exactly fulfilled in their season. While all this is the case, the conclusion is obvious, that sin cannot ever pass without a reckoning. The day of reckoning may in some cases be delayed for a time, till the cup of iniquity be quite full; but however long it be delayed, it will not be always so: The Lord must, and will at length arise to judgement; and the longer the stroke is deferred, the more tremendous and terrible it will be when at last it is inflicted; and that thus it shall be is most undoubted. This we are in the most explicit manner taught from the instance before us. We have in the case before us a most striking evidence afforded, that the Lord is a God of inflexible justice, and of unquestionable faithfulness. Not only did the Lord exemplify his work, his strange work upon Sodom, but he also recompensed upon the head of Lot's wife her iniquity, that in this way we might be instructed that sin cannot ever pass without a reckoning. In doing this, the Lord displayed himself as inflexible in justice; for justice called aloud that she should be punished as well as the Sodomites; and being inflexible from its claims, these had to be, and were accordingly complied with. He in like manner discovered himself as of unquestionable faithfulness: He was so in his threatenings as to the men of Sodom; he was no less so

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in the case of Lot's wife. The command was, Look not back; the threatening annexed was, if thou do so, thou shalt be consumed. She looked back: Divine faithfulness required that the threatening should be fulfilled. The Lord was faithful to his word: She was turned into a pillar of salt. We have thus clearly set before us, that though the Lord be the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet he will by no means clear the guilty. There is indeed a set time for judgement; the cup of iniquity must be filled, before a full and final reckoning shall commence; but then it shall be, there is no escaping from it: "For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil," Eccles. xii. 14. Consider then this, and be afraid, ye that forget to seek the Lord. Delude not yourselves with thinking that the Lord is such an one as yourselves, and that he approves your sin. Be assured he will sharply reprove you, will set your sins in order before you. He is a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he. "Shall not he render to every man according to his works?"—We have pointed out to us,

5. That the Lord is sometimes very quick and speedy in the execution of judgement upon ungodly sinners, more especially against backsliding apostates; and that therefore no sinner has for a moment an absolute security as to his safety from the stroke of avenging justice. This, in a particular manner, should be considered by us. Not only in general must it be admitted, that the Lord is inflexible in his justice, of unquestionable faithfulness, and will by no means clear the guilty; not only is there thus an absolute certainty that sin must sooner or later meet with its due desert; we say, not only must this be admitted, but also the matter

matter becomes still more alarming, when we are instructed that the Lord is sometimes very quick and speedy in his judicial procedure. Every sinner in his nature deserves the divine indignation; and the Lord would be just, were he instantly to arise to judgement the moment we commence the sinner. That this is not the case must doubtless ever be ascribed to his sovereign will, and his long-suffering patience. It is however to be observed, that though in holy sovereignty the Lord often, and indeed most ordinarily, defers the execution of his act, his strange act, yet he sometimes, and that not unfrequently, adopts a different procedure. The judgement follows so quickly after the transgression, that we can be at no loss to understand the greatness of the one, from the grievousness of the other; and as the matter lies wholly in the sovereign good pleasure of God, whether judgement shall be instantly executed, or shall be delayed for a season, till the cup of iniquity be filled up, when it will become inconceivably dreadful; we say, as this is the case, there is the most sufficient ground from hence to conclude, that the sinner has not for a moment an absolute security from the stroke of avenging justice; he must of necessity, in consequence, be in continual alarm lest it fall upon him.

This is not mere speculation, it is established from the stubborn fact before us, and must be attended to and admitted where a due remembrance of it is rendered. In this instance the Lord was very quick and speedy in the execution of judgement. No sooner did Lot's wife sin, than deserved indignation flamed forth against her. Her apostasy from God cost her dear. This the Lord is more especially displeased with, what he will not fail highly to resent: "If any man draw back," says he, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Nor

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Is this the only instance of the Lord's being quick and speedy in his judicial procedure? Thus also was it with Pharaoh and the Egyptians; with Judas; with Ananias and Sapphira; and a variety of other instances. These are set up as beacons to warn us of the danger to which we are exposed; to instruct us in the important truth which has been stated. How alarmed in consequence should we be? Though the Lord often exercises his patience and forbearance, and so defers the vindictive stroke for a season; yet as he does not always so, has in many instances done otherwise, there is thus the utmost uncertainty as to the matter with every individual that is in danger. No one can assure himself, but the commission of sin may, in his experience, instantly draw down the execution of judgement against him. This is the more to be dreaded when there is a going on in trespasses, a backsliding with a perpetual backsliding, a sinning under the receipt of mercies, a hardening ourselves yet the more. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," Prov. xxix. 1.

We have pointed out to us,
 6. That there is no time or place which can warrant our safety in sinning, and that the sinner, though he may escape deserved judgement at one time, shall assuredly meet with it at another, and this still the more awfully the longer it is delayed. These observations, with propriety, may be connected together, as being nearly allied to each other, and as clearly arising from the subject before us. Sin is so much an object of divine abhorrence, what his displeasure and indignation is so strongly pointed against, that if we yield to it, be our situation what it will, our safety can in no respect be insured. The circumstances of time and place may aggravate, but can never extenuate
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our offence, or be of any influence to secure our safety when sinning. Though the case be ever so urgent, the occasion ever so favourable, our associates ever so respectable and religious; nay, though the aspects of providence be ever so inviting; in short, though the time should be ever so well chosen, and the place ever so secret and convenient for the purpose; yet none of all these can either excuse us for sinning, or screen us from deserved judgement. This we apprehend is clearly evident from what occurred in the instance before us. If there ever was a time when, or a place which could have warranted safety in sinning, certainly Lot's wife would have escaped unpunished. The Lord was for the present in so far dealing kindly towards her, and of course, if ever there could be a time when there was safety in sinning, it might have been expected that the Lord would have suffered her offence to pass unpunished. In like manner, if ever there could be a place when safety in an evil course might be insured, certainly her situation was very promising: She was out of Sodom, the place devoted to destruction: She was in the way to Zoar, a safe dwelling: She was in company, and in the most intimate connection with one, if not more, who was dear to the Lord, and from whom, in consequence, every vindictive evil was at the greatest distance. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to suppose that her safety, even though sinning, would have been certain, if ever it could have been so with any. But to demonstrate that no time or place, or any circumstance whatever, can warrant our safety in sinning, the Lord, when she looked back, turned her into a pillar of salt, that all may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly. We are not to do evil that good may come; and much less can we be blameless when we have no such excuse to plead.

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But as no time nor place can warrant our safety in sinning, it is also to be adverted to, that the sinner, though he may escape deserved judgement at one time, will most assuredly meet with it at another; and this the more awfully the longer it is delayed. This we are clearly taught in the case before us. Lot's wife was delivered out of Sodom, was not overwhelmed with the Sodomites; and yet she perished in her way to Zoar, was turned into a pillar of salt in the plain. In like manner, though the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand, and an out-stretched arm, yet he destroyed them that believed not in the wilderness; though they escaped deserved judgement at one time, they had it inflicted upon them at another; and so in other instances, persons may be sharers in a common temporal salvation at one time, and soon after be involved in the most dreadful calamities. As to spiritual deliverances and spiritual mercies, the matter is quite different. These are so inseparably connected, that the receipt of one secures the enjoyment of all in due time. But it is by no means so as to the bounties of common providence. There is no security for our future safety from our present situation in this respect; nay, so far from this, it is to be observed, that the most grievous judgements do often follow the enjoyment of great outward mercies, if these are mis-improved, if there is an abounding in sin under or immediately after the receipt of these. Thus the threatening, Joshua, xxiv. 20. "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange Gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good." It concerns you to profit by the instruction which Lot's wife is thus affording you. Deceive not yourselves with imagining, that some time or place, or some favourable circumstance, will warrant your safety even when engaged

gaged in evil-doing. Be assured, whenever, and where-ever sin is committed, it, without peradventure, always exposes to the just judgement of God. Trust not that your safety is certain, because you have hitherto escaped that judgement to which you were exposed. Though you have missed the stroke at one time, it may, nay, unless you are effectually provided against it, it will effectually reach you at another time. There is no safety for persons but in Christ; and united to his person, interested in his righteousness, no evil can befall any, or plague come nigh their dwelling: He is the man that is and shall be an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. — We have pointed out to us,

7. That it is peculiarly dangerous for persons to give way to sin when the Lord is either displaying his kindness towards them, or is executing deserved judgement upon others. When the divine goodness is displayed, it should produce a hatred of, and a turning from sin; it should influence the love and practice of holiness; and it is never made a proper account of by persons unless this is the effect which it has. Accordingly, when matters are otherwise, when under the receipt of mercies there is a sinning yet the more, this cannot fail to be highly displeasing to the Lord, and will provoke his just indignation. The contempt and misimprovement of divine goodness, and a sinning under the receipt of mercies is clearly this; we say, the contempt of divine goodness in a particular manner fills up the measure of iniquity, and brings speedily forward the execution of deserved judgement. As the display of divine goodness should have a proper effect upon persons, so, when his judgements are upon the earth, there should be a standing in awe of them, a learning righteousness.

When

When therefore this is not the case, when there is a going on frowardly, a giving way to sin notwithstanding, as persons when sinning have at any rate reason to be alarmed, they have much better ground at such a time to dread, lest judgement also should overtake them in an awful manner. For while the Lord will shew himself pure to the pure, with the froward he will shew himself froward. When the divine goodness is displayed towards persons, while deserved judgement is inflicted upon others, and in contradiction to all this, there is a hardening themselves in iniquity; this makes the matter still more aggravated, and the situation truly dangerous. By such conduct, there is at once a despising divine goodness, and a setting divine justice at defiance. The Lord will not hold such guiltless. There is the best reason to fear that the Lord will shut up the bowels of his despised goodness from them, and arise to the execution of that judgement which was so much set at nought by them, as was the case in the instance before us. Lot's wife, in her sad experience, found that it was peculiarly dangerous to give way to sin, while the Lord was displaying his kindness towards her, and executing deserved judgement upon the Sodomites; for when she did so, his kindness towards her ceased, and his indignation instantly flamed forth against her. She was set up as a beacon, to warn all in after ages to beware of the like conduct, as being at once most criminal and most dangerous. This being the case, what reason have all in our day to be alarmed. The Lord has been visiting us both with mercies and judgements; has been employing both these as means in his hand to reclaim and recover us. But alas! so far from these having a proper effect, like Israel of old, we sin yet the more; instead of being bettered, we seem to be growing worse and worse; and thence

it must be allowed, we are in a most critical and dangerous situation: Unless the Lord's tender mercies speedily prevent us, and this in the way of not remembering against us present or former iniquities, our ruin is inevitable; for he cannot but avenge himself, and that speedily, upon such a sinful nation as this. — We have pointed out to us, 8. That a mere profession of religion, a name to live among men, is no sufficient security against present or coming judgements. While many are altogether careless and indifferent as to the interests of religion, and so are rushing headlong to destruction; there are others who are no less certainly doing so, though in a much more plausible and intoxicating way; and these are the persons who, while they profess some concern as to religion, yet satisfy themselves with the mere form, and are denying the power; reckoning, that the whole of what is incumbent upon them, consists in the having a suitable profession of religion; attending to the external part of duty; and if this is attained, they conclude they cannot but be safe both here and hereafter. How mistaken persons are while entertaining such sentiments, is evident from what is before us. We have hence the most undoubted grounds to proceed upon, when asserting in agreeableness to the instruction we have just now stated. Lot's wife was one of the highest rank of professors in her day: She lived in a family which was one of the most religious at that time; she was wife to Lot, who is declared to be a righteous person; she enjoyed the external privileges of religion in common with those with whom she stood connected; nay, she came out of Sodom at the Lord's call; yet all the profession she had made, all the external privileges she enjoyed, were no sufficient security against that judgement which overtook her; nay, these had rather influence to bring

bring it forwards. Thus also in the case of the foolish virgins; their professions, their privileges, availed them nothing. It in no respect prevented the execution of their doom; they were cast into utter darkness. And to the same purpose our Saviour represents, that at the last day many would say, Lord, Lord, open to us: We have eaten and drunk in thy name; thou hast taught in our streets: Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name have done many wonderful works? But we are assured that this plea would be altogether unavailing, it will be over-ruled, as entirely insufficient to screen them from deserved judgement: Even to such he will say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Nay, so far from a mere profession of religion and external privileges being available to safety, if no corresponding practice and fruit be appearing, these, instead of securing from, will rather hasten forwards, and render more dreadful, the storm of indignation which is ready to devour the adversary. This being the case, how much should it concern persons not to rest satisfied with a mere profession of religion, or the enjoyment of external privileges? Be in earnest that there be such an heart in you as accords with the appearance you make. Be careful to walk worthy of the profession you have made, and the privileges you enjoy. Seek after acquaintance with the power of godliness, union to and communion with Jesus; for it is only thus that you can be in safety.

9. We have pointed out to us, that he that followeth Christ with a carnal heart, with an affection to the world, its profits or pleasures, will not follow him always, or even very long; such will not endure to the end. Our Saviour, in the days of his flesh, when inviting persons to come after him,

he expressly forewarned them, that if they would do this in an acceptable manner, they must follow him not merely in appearance, but specially, with truth in the inward parts; not in a partial, divided manner, but in the whole course and tenor of their conduct; nay, with the whole heart. Their hearts must be divorced from every object which was in competition with him, and be wholly engaged in his service, and to advance his honour in the world. Without this was the case, he assured them they could not be his disciples indeed: Says he, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." According to the apostle James, who loveth the world, i. e. with a supreme affection, the love of the Father cannot be in that person. Persons can never to purpose follow Christ, but those who have it for their aim, and in some sort as their attainment, to render to him the chief room in their heart, the pre-eminence in their affection; who have it at least for their desire, that every other concern be in subordination to the advancement of his honour and interests: When it is otherwise, there may be an appearance of following Christ, but it can be no more; and even that appearance will not, cannot continue long; it will instantly be given up with, when its maintenance is found inconsistent with a proper attention to that interest, which is dearer to the person than Christ or his cause.

This was strikingly exemplified in the instance before us. Lot's wife was, and had been for some considerable time, a follower of Christ by external profession. She was even at the period referred to, in appearance continuing to adorn the profes-

first she had made; but alas, her heart was not right with God, nor found in his statutes. Though she followed Christ, it would appear that it was not in spirit and in truth that she had ever done so: it was only with a carnal heart and a divided affection; and therefore when an attention to his service became inconsistent with a due regard to that interest which she held dearest, she, upon the matter, readily gave up with her former character and profession: By looking back to Sodom, and so in heart turning back, she in effect incorporated herself with those who were Christ's enemies. Thus also was it with the young man mentioned in the gospel: He came to Jesus with strong professions of a disposition to follow him; but, when Christ acquainted him, that in the event of his doing so in an acceptable manner, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow him; that, in evidence of having himself and what was his entirely at divine disposal, he must sell all that he had, and give to the poor; when this was proposed to him, so far from rendering a due compliance, he went away sorrowful, because he had large possessions. He was for following Christ with a carnal heart, only as far as his interest otherwise would permit, and no farther; no wonder then that he miscarried: And this will invariably be the case with every person who is in like circumstances. Such may maintain appearances for a time, and may do much to deceive themselves and others in regard to them; but the mask will at last be stripped off, their falsehood and hypocrisy, to their everlasting confusion and disgrace, will be fully detected.

We have pointed out to us,

10. What a fast hold the lusts of the flesh take of persons, and when left to themselves, how averse they are to give up with them, even at the call and command of Jehovah; nay, though in

interest as well as duty inculcate the necessity of their doing so. Sin is so evil and so bitter a thing, so base and so abominable in its nature, that one would think it would require a very small inducement to effect our giving up with the love and practice of it. It might be supposed, that inclination would concur with duty and interest to accomplish a full and final separation betwixt us and our lusts, in regard, while these subsist in and prevail over us, our situation is deplorable, and our ruin inevitable. But alas, this is far from being the case! Experience, as well as observation, inform us, that the lusts of the flesh have taken fast hold of us. Instead of being disposed, we are extremely averse to a giving up with them; nay, if left to ourselves, such is our infatuation, that though the call of God, as addressed to us, obliges to this; nay, even though interest concurs with duty, as it always does, to influence this; yet, after all, we will not be prevailed upon to turn from the evil of our ways. Having chosen idols, after them we will go. Such is the ascendancy that the lusts of the flesh have over us; such their power and influence, that nothing but the almighty power and grace of Jehovah, being exerted in and upon us, accompanying the gracious call so as to render it effectual, nothing but this can break the chain, dissolve the charm, and accomplish our liberty. We have a most striking demonstration of this in the case before us: Though judgement was near, even at the very door; though the urgent call of Jehovah laid under an indispensable obligation to turn from the evil of her ways, and her doings that were not good; though interest proclaimed the necessity of her doing so; though there were a variety of circumstances which should have had influence with her to this end; yet, as to Lot's wife, none of all those had any due effect. Such deep

root

root had the lusts of the flesh taken in her heart; so attached was she to them, that she neither could nor would give up with them; she had set her heart upon iniquity; and refused to return from the evil of her ways. This being the case, we may discern what danger there is in being left to ourselves, and how jealous we should be of what is agreeable to us; lest, instead of delighting in what is right, we be hugging our lusts, cherishing that viper which incessantly gnaws upon our vitals, and unless dislodged, will sting us to death. We may also perceive the absolute necessity of divine power to break our covenant with death, to disannul our agreement with hell, to turn from the power of sin and Satan unto God. Sooner may the Ethiopian change his colour, and the leopard his spots, than we that are accustomed to do evil, can of ourselves learn to do well.—We have pointed out to us,

ROM. 11. That none in an acceptable manner render an obedience to the call of God, who do not part with sin in affection as well as in action; with the heart as well as in outward profession and appearance. The calls, the commands of God are all founded upon the highest reason, though we cannot always see this; a corresponding return is of course incumbent upon us, otherwise we are not rendering him our reasonable service. Our obedience, when it is acceptable, must in some sort be proportioned to the extent of the precept; and as the Lord at any rate requires the heart from us, this being his due, our obedience must be with and in the heart, as well as with and by the outward profession and deportment. Accordingly, when he calls us to turn from the evil of our ways and our doings that are not good, certainly we never truly answer this call, so as effectually to comply with it, but in so far as we give up both with the dove and practice of sin. It is by no means enough

enough that we in so far give up with sin, so as in a great measure to abstain from evil-doing; this, though good in itself, is not the whole of what is incumbent upon us; and if it is all that is proposed, will be of little avail: Our reform from sin, in practice, will be of short continuance, unless we also turn from it in heart and affection. If sin still keep the heart, though it may be under some restraints for a time, it will soon burst asunder those restraints, and rage more violently than ever, as has, alas! too often been verified. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

But as there cannot be a real turning from sin in practice, but where there is at the same time a turning from it in heart and affection; so neither can there be a real turning from it in heart, but when there is a turning from it in practice. There can be no truth in the former, but when it is exhibited by corresponding fruits in the latter; and both these are necessary, absolutely necessary, to an acceptable compliance with the call of God. Accordingly it is observable, that while Lot, as rendering an acceptable obedience to the divine command, gave up with Sodom and his former connections therein, both in affection and action, readily yielded them up to the righteous judgement of God, to do with and upon them as he saw meet; while this was the case with him, his wife acted a very different part. She indeed in so far answered the call of God, but she did not do it in an acceptable

ceptable manner. She only parted with Sodom, and her former connections in appearance, and not in reality. It was not with the heart and affection she did so. She in heart and with her looks turned back, and thus discovered the nature of that compliance she was rendering. This greatly displeased the Lord, and brought ruin upon her; for God will not be mocked: He desireth truth in the inward parts.

In the *last* place, We have pointed out to us, that persons may go great lengths in the profession of religion, and in a seeming corresponding practice, and yet after all make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. This is a most alarming, and at the same time a most undoubted truth. Every thing is not gold that glisters: The fairest professions and appearances may prove deceitful: The most promising blossoms may yield no harvest: There may be good beginnings in appearance, and corresponding advances in religion for a season, while these neither do nor can endure, as having no root. Thus in the case before us, Lot's wife had been long a professor of religion; she had made great seeming advances in a corresponding practice, particularly in leaving Sodom at the command of God, and directing her course towards Zoar; and yet after all she did not endure to the end. At a time when this might least of all have been expected, she made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; and the reason it would appear was, notwithstanding of all that proceeded from her, her heart was never right with God, nor sound in his statutes. Thus also in like manner was it with Jehu, Judas, Demas, and others. Though their words and conduct for a time seemed good, yet their hearts were never sincere; and therefore, when pressed with opposite interests, they could not support the conflict: They in the day

day of battle turned back, and walked no more with Jesus in the profession of his name and cause. Nor is this a singular case, it but too frequently occurs in every period; each therefore, with the disciples, should be habitually jealous of themselves, and crying out, Lord, is it I? Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

Thus we have laid before you some of the important lessons which we apprehend this subject affords us. In so far as these are justly drawn, and are according to the law and the testimony, they claim your most serious attention, and a corresponding improvement. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

S E R.

S E R M O N XIX.

LUKE, xvii. 32.

Remember Lot's wife.

HAVING in the preceding Discourse pointed out some of these important lessons which this subject affords us, we now might have drawn to a conclusion; but as some may be ready to observe, though we admit that what has been expressed is in so far just, yet what concern have we in the matter, what obligations are we under to remember Lot's wife? This consideration marks the propriety of our attempting, as was proposed,

IV. To state the obligations we are under to remember and improve the whole of what is thus set before us. Upon this part of our method we shall not enlarge. Among the various obligations which lie upon us to this end, we apprehend, that its being the Lord's great design by this his dispensation towards Lot's wife that we should be thus exercised;—its being his express will explicitly addressed to us;—it being eminently subservient to the advancement of his glory;—and our interests and welfare being deeply interested in the matter: we apprehend, that these considerations, if duly attended to, furnish with obligations which render this exercise on our part indispensable. —We say,

1. That

That it was the Lord's great design by this his dispensation towards Lot's wife, that her conduct and his procedure towards her should be had in remembrance by us; a suitable improvement rendered; and thence we are under an indispensable obligation to be thus exercised. The Lord does nothing in vain; he has always some special end and purpose to accomplish by all his dispensations, both of grace and providence. In the present, as well as in every other instance, he must have one. As his design in the case before us could not possibly be on his own account, that he might preserve for himself the remembrance of these events, in regard this was in no respect needed; as we apprehend it could not either be wholly on account of Lot's wife that the Lord performed this strange work; it must doubtless, therefore, follow, that it was on account of the generations following, on our account as well as others, that it was done. Besides, it is to be attended to, that the Lord hath not only erected a memorial of the whole in his work of judgement against her; he hath also put the matter on record in his word, and this not only when the transactions were recent, but ages afterwards, when the whole is in effect brought up in review before us. By all which there is a clear demonstration, that it was and is his great design, that these events should not be forgotten, that they should be remembered and improved by us. If this is not admitted, it will be difficult to determine any end or purpose so important, which the Lord could have in view by this his procedure. If this was God's great design, as seems unquestionable, then certainly we, in consequence, are laid under an indispensable obligation to be thus exercised. It is beyond question incumbent upon us to promote, as far as in our power, those designs which the Lord has in view by his dispensations, either providential

vidential or gracious in general; and much more should this be attended to by us, when his designs have a special reference to ourselves. When this is the case, we should as it were be workers together with God; we should be anxious that those his designs be fulfilled in and by us. To do otherwise, is to rise up in rebellion against God; and if rebels against him, how dangerous is our situation? If we would act a proper part, we, as constrained by this consideration, must remember Lot's wife.

2. It is the Lord's express desire and demand, that we should be thus exercised; and therefore we are under an indispensable obligation to attend upon it. While to promote the divine designs as far as in our power is clearly incumbent upon us; accordingly, when these are obvious, or are made known to us, we are under an obligation to attend upon them. But the obligation is increased, and becomes still more forcible, when there is not only a design to be promoted, but also a peremptory desire and demand to the same effect expressed. Well, this is precisely the case in the present instance. Not only was it the Lord's design, by the tenor of his dispensations towards her, that Lot's wife should be had in continual remembrance, but also there is his desire and demand to the same end expressed. His will as to this matter was indirectly signified by his works, as well as by many references in Scriptures to the events in relation to her. But in the words of our text it is most explicitly set forth; our duty in the most pointed terms is declared, and a remembrance of Lot's wife peremptorily enjoined: For though these words may in some respect be considered as a caution or counsel which is rendered, yet they are not wholly, or only so. While all cautions and counsels which come from the Lord are to be regarded as of equal force with precepts, so they are often expressed as

if such; nay, in their nature and form they are almost nothing different. This is particularly the case in the present instance. The direction here has both the expression and the force of a precept; nay, in its nature and form is clearly such; and this renders our regard to it indispensable. Jehovah is our supreme lawgiver; his will must therefore ever be a law to us, and the rule of our duty: Whenever he commands, it is our part to listen; and as to whatever he enjoins, it is incumbent upon us to render a ready obedience. This is due not merely by some, but even by all. His commandments have an authority, an influence over every individual without exception or distinction. What Christ said to his disciples, and to the multitude, in the days of his flesh, he is as really saying to us, and in consequence, we are all of us, from this consideration, under an indispensable obligation to remember Lot's wife.

3. It being eminently subservient to the advancement of the glory of God, that there should be a remembering Lot's wife; there is thence an obligation laid upon us that we should be thus exercised. Man's great and chief end is to glorify God. Says the apostle, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Whatsoever therefore has a tendency to this, we are under an indispensable obligation to attend to and follow after. That a remembering Lot's wife is to the glory of God is unquestionable; for when this is done in a proper manner, there will be a shewing forth the honour of Jehovah's name, and a making his praise glorious; there will be acknowledging and adoring him as glorious in holiness, and terrible in his workings towards the sons of men; and at the same time, there will be yielding a due obedience to the holy commandment, a regarding the

giving of witness to the truth of the work

work of the Lord, and a considering the operation of his hands; *This is part of the operation of his hands.* In the *last* place, Our present and eternal welfare being so deeply interested in the matter, this lays an indispensable obligation upon us to be thus exercised. Next to the glory of God, the advancement of which should have the first and a chief place with us, a due regard to our own concerns should occupy the next place; and therefore, what ever has a tendency to promote our present and eternal welfare, claims in a particular manner our attention. No man acting as he ought to do will hate his own flesh, will trifle with or neglect his own interests; he will rather exert himself as enabled, and as opportunity offers, to cherish and advance these. That a remembering Lot's wife, if done in a proper manner, has a special influence in promoting our present and eternal welfare, is well apprehend, unquestionable. The whole of the Lord's ways, and his workings to the sons of men, both frowning and favourable, are done not only with a view to his glory; he has also a special regard to the benefit of his creatures in his dispensations; and this not merely those of them who are more immediately affected by them, but also all others to whom they are made known. It is on this account that the remembrance of them is so carefully preserved, and they handed down from one generation to another. *This is the reason why the Lord has set before us persons who, under the influence of the Spirit and grace of Christ, were eminently engaged in the love and practice of holiness, in following Jesus through good and through bad report; that we might attend to and consider their faith, their patience, and their fortitude; that we, in consequence, might be induced to imitate their example; our own interests, besides more important considerations, forcibly urging*

to this. Hence the exhortation is, "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The Lord often records the experience of the saints who have obtained mercy, that we, that others, might in so far improve their privileges as a ground of confidence that he will in like manner bless us. Thus, one believer's mercy is proposed as food to another believer, which, if suitably improved, will strengthen his faith, and promote his progress to the rest above. "He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him." Psal. lxi. 6.

The Lord has also set before us persons who, as given up to the lusts of their own heart, as suffered to wander in counsels of their own devising, were chargeable with great sinning, and were subjected to grievous judgements following upon it; and his great design in doing so, as expressly declared, is, that others, profiting by their example, might be deterred from following after them to do evil. Thus the evil conduct of the church under the Old Testament, and the Lord's dealings with them in consequence, is recorded for a warning to the church under the New; as you see, 1 Cor. x. 5.—11. "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the
"destroyer.

the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Thus also, as to Sodom and Gomorrah, it is said, 2 Pet. ii. 6, that the Lord's turning those cities into ashes, "condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." In like manner, Lot's wife when she looked back was turned into a pillar of salt, that others might hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly. In these circumstances, it is obvious that a due regard to our present and eternal welfare renders our being exercised in remembering and improving this dispensation indispensable. In this way much spiritual profiting may be acquired, and much evil prevented: But we shall not farther insist upon this part of our subject. — It now only remains that we,

V. Make some improvement. And this subject furnishes us with most important directions in regulating our conduct.

1. We are hence presented with a special article of duty, viz. The remembering and improving to the glory of God and our own benefit, the several events in relation to Lot's wife. We are not to consider ourselves as uninterested in this matter. While in every instance it is incumbent upon us to regard the doing of the Lord, and observe the operation of his hand, it is more eminently our duty to be thus exercised, when the Lord has in a particular manner signified his will to this end, as in the case before us, and there are other obligations besides which render it indispensable.

2. We are hence taught how much we should dread the giving way to sin. If we attend to the dispensation before us, we will in some sort discern the evil nature and high demerit of sin. We will

be satisfied, that the Lord is sometimes very quick and speedy in the execution of judgement against ungodly sinners; that he is of inflexible justice and unquestionable faithfulness, and therefore will by no means clear the guilty. We will also perceive, that secret sins are in the light of his countenance; that no time or place, or any circumstance whatever, can warrant our safety in sinning; and that, though it be at all times dangerous to go on in an evil course, it is more eminently so, when the Lord is either displaying his goodness towards us, or is performing his work, his strange work, towards others. Well, if all this is duly considered, what more powerful inducement can be supposed to restrain us from working iniquity? Certainly we do not improve what is before us as we ought, we despise and disregard it, unless it has this effect upon us; and if it has not, our guilt will be much greater than even Lot's wife's was: for to every privilege and precept she enjoyed, and which she misimproved, we have the additional circumstances of her sin and punishment, as made known to us, to profit by; all which lays us under the strongest obligations to guard against sin. The language of this dispensation to us without question is, that we hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly. And not only does it teach us to guard against gross sins, those which are of an atrocious nature; it also warns us to beware of every sin, as in its nature clearly deserving and subjecting to an everlasting curse. It more especially instructs us to guard against a being too much attached to this world, and the things of the world, in regard this is not only sinful in itself, but also has a strong tendency to lead us into manifold other evils. However sweet sin may taste at the surface, at bottom it is nothing other than bitterness, gall, and wormwood. Such ways though they may seem

right

right to a man, yet the end of them are the ways of death, as was exemplified in the present instance.

We may learn,

3. What reason we have to stand in awe of God's judgements. This naturally arises from a becoming attention to our subject. If we give unto God that glory which is his due, he will be feared and had in reverence by us. The command is most exprefs, Sanctify the Lord God of hosts in your heart, and make him at all times your fear and your dread. In attending to this, we are not only to fear the Lord and his goodness, but are also to stand in awe of his judgements. The revelation which the Lord has made of these in his threatenings, should not only affect us, but also the tremendous displays which he has given in the awful monuments which he has erected to the glory of his justice, by the execution of judgement upon impenitent transgressors, should still more alarm us; in regard we have thus afforded us the knowledge not only of what may be dreaded, but also of what has actually been accomplished; and hence may learn, that the threatening is not a mere scarecrow: the utmost reality belongs to it, and the most undoubted certainty as to its being fulfilled in its season, if it is despised and disregarded. This has been, this still may be expected to be the case; and therefore, if we act a proper part, if we make a suitable improvement of what is before us, we will stand in awe of God's judgements. — We may hence perceive,

4. How incumbent it is upon us to follow after holiness in all manner of conversation. This must be evident, if a suitable attention is given to what is before us; if often that which is by us reckoned to be no sin, or at least but a small offence, is in the sight of God a great evil, and subjects to his just indignation; if he that follows Christ with a
carnal

carnal heart and affection, will not follow him to the end, or even very long; if none to purpose answer the call of God, who do not give up with sin in affection as well as in action, with the heart as well as in outward appearance; and, if a mere profession of religion, the form of godliness, is in itself no security against present or coming evils; all which is evident from the case before us. In short, if we carefully observe the evil conduct of Lot's wife in all its several ingredients, and the dismal consequences following upon it; if at the same time we recollect the propriety of Lot's deportment, and the pleasant issue to which it led: If all this is duly considered, what proper improvement can be made of the whole, if it does not in a striking manner engage to the love and practice of holiness? While the wages of sin is death, wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths paths of peace. We cannot effectually guard against sin, but when we are careful to follow after holiness. When we are careless or remiss as to the one, we are exceedingly exposed to a being chargeable with the other. The omission of duty in its nature and tendency, leads forward to the commission of sin. Lot's wife first lingered, then drew back from behind her husband. This was a clear omission of duty, for she was enjoined to press forwards: The consequence was, she looked back; and this was direct disobedience and transgression. If therefore we would either consult duty or interest, we will, with the Psalmist, exclaim, "Oh, that our ways were directed to keep thy statutes, then shall we not be ashamed, when we have a respect unto all thy commandments." We may discern how thankful we ought to be even under the severest trials; what sufficient ground we have afforded for justifying the Lord in all his procedure, acknowledging and adoring the riches

riches of his goodness manifested towards us. There is nothing in regard to which we are more apt to err, than in drawing improper conclusions as to the Lord's dealings in relation to us. While we are too ready to be inattentive to, and unthankful for his kindness, when there is any seeming severity in his dispensations, we are exceedingly disposed to quarrel at this, as if it was unjust and unwarrantable. What often renders the dispensations of Providence with which we are visited to be the more distressing, is, that instead of attending to any alleviating circumstance that is afforded, we overlook every thing of this kind, and brood chiefly upon that which is gloomy and grievous. Hence, instead of lessening those evils which we are meeting with, they rather become increased; for to those which really exist, we add many imaginary ones; and these last are often of all others the most depressing. But while we do so, this is, and should be considered as our infirmity. In order to our making a proper estimate of divine dispensations, either favourable or frowning, we must consider both what our iniquities deserve, and what is the tenor of his dealings in relation to others. If we consider what is the high demerit of our offences, and compare this with the tenor of his procedure towards us, it will exceedingly heighten the value of those mercies which we are receiving, and lessen the severity of those trials which may be measured out. Instead of having reason to think that the Lord is dealing hardly with us, we will have the most sufficient grounds afforded to justify his procedure, and even when most severely afflicted, to sing of mercy as well as judgement; in regard we must acknowledge that "he has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

It is his procedure, acknowledging and atoning the riches

It is also of importance to observe the Lord's dealings in relation to others; and if we compare our situation and circumstances with those of many others, we will have the most abundant reason for thankfulness. Whatever distresses we may have to endure, yet our condition must be allowed to be vastly preferable to theirs. For instance, let us only remember, and suitably improve the object set before us, Lot's wife. Certainly if this is done, we will have the best grounds for justifying the Lord's procedure, acknowledging and adoring the riches of divine goodness manifested towards us. Whatever troubles may affect us, yet certainly our situation is vastly better than hers was. While she is set up as a monument of divine indignation, we are, after all that we are meeting with, prisoners of hope, monuments of the Lord's sparing mercies, if not of his regenerating grace; and this, though our guilt be equally great, and even much more heinous than hers was. In short, when we consider how much iniquity abounds in and with us; how repeatedly we have insulted the Majesty of heaven and earth; when we recollect how frequently we have despised his goodness, and set divine justice at defiance; what little regard we have rendered to precepts; how unaffected we have been with examples either of mercy or judgement which have been afforded us; and yet, that notwithstanding of all this, we are enjoying the day of God's merciful visitation, when he is even in the midst of wrath, remembering for us mercy; while divine judgements of a most tremendous nature have been inflicted upon persons less deserving of it than we are, as in the present case: We say, if all this is attended to, and suitably improved, there are the most sufficient grounds for being exercised as has been stated. A proper account of matters cannot be rendered, but in so far as this is the case. "Oh that

"that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,
 "and for his wonderful works to the children of
 "men!"

In the *last* place, we are hence instructed how much in earnest we should be in flying for refuge, in laying hold upon the hope that is set before us, that we may be safe from all present and coming storms of divine indignation. The Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners; he wills that they should turn to him and live. Hence the gracious call is, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" So much is he disposed to promote our eternal welfare, that he has not only signified his pleasure to this end, but also has graciously provided a way of escape for the guilty; he has laid their help upon him that is mighty; he has raised up a chosen one from among the people. Nay, not only is this help provided for, but also it is exhibited to them in a gospel dispensation. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life." But, as if all this was not a sufficient display of kindness and grace towards us, that we might the more forcibly be influenced to improve that help which he has provided, the Lord has also set before us monuments both of his ineffable grace and inexorable justice, that by these we might be invited and prevailed upon to fly for refuge, and lay hold on this help. Certainly we never make a suitable improvement of these monuments which have been erected, but in so far as they have this effect upon us. These have all of them a tongue, a hand, a language, which, in the most explicit manner, urge an immediate and serious attention to our safety; and we never to purpose listen to that instruction which is conveyed to us, but when we are taking measures to secure this.

These

These monuments to the riches of divine grace, which the Lord raises up as it were with the most persuasive eloquence, and in accents the most winning, invite and allure us to taste and see that God is good. They in the strongest manner assure us, that the riches of sovereign grace are exceeding great, and that, while all that are far from God shall perish, it is truly good to draw near to him. Thus in particular was it with the apostle Paul. Says he, "I, who before was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." In like manner, these monuments to the glory of inexorable justice which the Lord has erected, do with no less force and energy demonstrate the necessity of our flying from the wrath to come, and speedily betaking ourselves to the city of refuge. While the one with the kindest aspect would draw us, the other with demure looks, and a tone of wholesome severity, would drive us thither; not only knowing, but even exhibiting the terrors of the Lord, they would persuade men as in the present instance. This was one great design for which this monument of divine indignation was set up; and while it thus addresses us, we never aright improve this dispensation, but when it in so far induces us to consult our safety. Her lingering, her turning from behind her husband, her looking back, and the awful issue to which matters were brought in her experience, can never be made a proper account of, but when we consider them as so many excitements to quicken our diligence in the way of duty, and especially in flying from the wrath to come. And it is truly comfortable to reflect, that while our iniquities are much greater than that of

Lot's

Lot's wife were, and our danger no less impending, but any of refuge is as near, and more so to us, than Zoar was to her. We have not to ascend up into heaven, to bring Christ down from above; nor have we to descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead: He is nigh us, even in the word of faith which is preached. Look therefore unto Jesus, and be ye saved; for he is God, and there is none else.

We shall have finished what we intend from this subject, when we have addressed ourselves, to those who are going on avowedly in their trespasses;—to those who only have a profession of religion and no more;—and lastly, to those who not only have a name to live, but are also real Christians. —We are,

1. To address ourselves to those who are going on avowedly in their trespasses, have neither the fear of God in their hearts, nor before their eyes, but are working iniquity with all greediness. There are, without question, too many of this description; and to such, however insensible they may be of their situation, however regardless in relation to it, the call in a particular manner is addressed, *Remember Lot's wife*. Oh then, Sirs, attend seriously to your situation! However much you may delude yourselves with imagining, that you are rich and increased in goods, and that you stand in need of nothing; that all is well with you; be assured, the reverse is the melancholy fact. You are, whatever you or others may think in relation to you, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked; your situation is at once most deplorable, and most dangerous. Those ways, which for the present seem right to you, if persisted in, will, without peradventure, lead down to the chambers of death. There is nothing more debasing and more destructive than sin. There is, there can be, no safety for you, while

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you

you are pursuing an evil course; and much less when you are, without curb or controul, turning aside into crooked paths with the workers of iniquity. Though the folly that is in your heart would persuade you that there is no God, yet deceive not yourselves with so groundless, such an absurd imagination. Verily there is a God on earth that judgeth; who, without respect of persons, rendereth to every man according to his work, and will by no means clear the guilty. His judgement against impenitent transgressors is most tremendous, and at the same time absolutely inevitable. Though hand should join in hand, these cannot escape: Though they may escape at one time, judgement will assuredly overtake them at another. It is certain, and may be speedily inflicted. Remember Lot's wife, and tremble at the issue which awaits you, if you continue impenitent. By an attention to her situation and circumstances, you may be convinced that the wages of sin is death, and that there is the most undoubted certainty of these wages being rendered, unless you are plucked as brands out of the burning. Be persuaded then to take the alarm before it be too late. Bless God that your situation, though truly dangerous, is by no means desperate. Though ye have hitherto been stout-hearted, and far from righteousness, behold a righteousness absolutely perfect, and in every respect suited to your need, is brought near to you: A salvation, well ordered in all things and sure, is presented unto you: Christ, the Redeemer, himself waits that he may be gracious: The city of refuge is open to, and accessible by you. We beseech you, therefore, to improve this the day of your merciful visitation: Fly as clouds, and as doves to your windows: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way: Beware of hesitation or delay, when your business is so urgent: Now is the accepted

cepted time, and the day of salvation: It may soon be too late: It may be but a little time when, if you make not your escape, judgement will overtake and overwhelm you. Lot's wife lingered, looked back, and was instantly turned into a pillar of salt. Take warning from her folly, and be wise for yourselves, now when opportunity is afforded you to this end: While it is said to-day, hearken to the voice of mercy; harden not your hearts as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. It will exceedingly aggravate your condemnation at last, if you are found rejecting the counsel of God against your own souls. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you in the day of judgement. Make haste then and escape for your life: Seek after union to Jesus, and communion with him: Abide in him, that when he shall appear ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

2. We would address those who have a profession of religion, and nothing more. We would earnestly beseech you to consider your situation. You are in fact nothing better, if you are not worse, than those who are going on avowedly in their trespasses. With a fair outside, ye are inwardly defiled and deformed. A mere profession of religion, when there is nothing more, can avail you nothing; nay, your situation is the more dangerous on this account. Our Saviour assures us, that whoremongers and adulterers will enter into the kingdom of heaven before scribes and Pharisees. You will also recollect, that at the last day there will be many who, while they can avow to Jesus, that in his name they have prophesied, and in his name done many mighty works, and upon this ground will have confidence before him, yet after all, will be covered with confusion; such will be dismissed with, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity,

quity, I never knew you. A name to live is by no means sufficient; there must be truth in the inward parts. Remember Lot's wife. She was an eminent professor, and yet after all she did not escape deserved judgement. Be persuaded then not to trust to so false a foundation: Beware of resting satisfied with the mere form of religion, the having a name and a place in God's house: Seek earnestly after an acquaintance with the power of godliness; that there be such an heart in you as corresponds with the outward profession and appearances you are making. The Lord is requiring the heart; and he can never have that glory which is his due, but when he fills the chief room in the heart, and has the pre-eminency in your affections: He is never honoured as he ought to be, but when you are following him fully, not only in outward appearance, but also in truth: He is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. If matters are otherwise with you, you are in the utmost danger; You may deceive yourselves and others, but God cannot be imposed upon, and he will not be mocked: Formality and hypocrisy is what highly displeases him, and it shall not pass unpunished. Let the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh. Labour henceforward to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things; and to this end, be importunate with a God of grace, that, according to his promise, he would not only give you another heart, but even a new heart and a right spirit; that he would put his fear in your hearts, and ye shall not depart from him.

In the *last* place, we would address ourselves to those who not only have a name to live, but are also real Christians. Such are under peculiar obligations to suffer the word of exhortation. Our text looks in a particular manner towards you, and emphatically calls upon you to remember Lot's wife.

wife. You are, by this dispensation, powerfully warned to beware of sin. You will observe, the wages of sinning is, in every instance, death. You are charged not to be confident in your own strength; to guard against spiritual pride; not to be high-minded, but to fear always. You are directed not to rest in any measure of spiritual things, or even in grace received: He that does not go forward, is going backward; and there is no advancing in the Christian course, but when our strength is proportioned to our day. We would beseech you to adore the riches of sovereign grace, that grace which has abounded towards you; so that instead of being set up as a monument of vindictive justice, ye have been made monuments to the praise of redeeming love, and were plucked as brands from the devouring flame. Beware of glorying on this ground, as if you had done the whole or any part of it yourselves. Give unto the Lord that glory which is his due; for had his arm not brought salvation, you still would have remained dead in trespasses and sins. Be exercised daily in learning your own weakness: Study a needy and becoming dependence upon the Lord: In your regards to duty and difficulty, be always leaning upon your beloved. Maintain a constant watchfulness over your whole conduct: Be ever on your guard against sin: Lay aside every weight, and that sin which so easily besets you: Deprecate your ever being left to draw back; and to this end take good heed to the sins of the day and age in which you live: Shun all compliance with these: Be not conformed to this world, but transformed, to the renewing of your mind. Labour to keep up close communion with God, and to be conscientious in waiting upon him in his ordinances: Bless God for all his kindness towards you: Glory also in tribulation: Study reconciliation with all his providen-

tial dispensations towards you; so as to be concluding in regard to all of them, as the Psalmist did, "Well hast thou dealt with thy servant according to thy word." You have the best grounds for saying so. He has not dealt so with many others. — In one word, look forwards to and long for that happy period, when you shall be set up as pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out. The Lord's works of judgement are sure pledges for the accomplishment of his works of mercy. He can be no less faithful to his promise, than he has been to his threatening; for he delights in mercy. When therefore, remembering his holiness, in the execution of deserved judgement, if you are doing it in a proper manner, this should powerfully encourage you, to expect rich displays of his mercy, in the consummation of eternal salvation at last. "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab; and wounded the dragon? "Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."

FINIS.

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ЛИЛИИ И ОМЕС

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V. VI И О И И З

John W. B. Jones - Will into him

ERRATA.

Page 31. line 8. *for in read that*
 Page 36. line 6. *for is, read are*
 Page 82. line 36. *for where read whole*
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 _____ line 23. *for V, make 1.*

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